The Soteriology of
Leo the Great

Bernard Green

OXFORD THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS

Editorial Committee

OXFORD THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS

The Soteriology of Leo the Great

BERNARD GREEN

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

For Jennifer

This page intentionally left blank

Preface

I embarked on research on Leo the Great because he is an important, accessible but neglected theologian. He is famous for his contribution to the Council of Chalcedon but he was also the most eminent western early interpreter of Augustine. Leo almost certainly met Augustine during the Pelagian controversy; he encountered Augustine's Christology through the work of Cassian in the Nestorian controversy; his own understanding of Christology and the relationship between Christ and society owed almost everything to Augustine and Ambrose. He is important but he is also accessible as his surviving work (sermons and letters), though substantial, is less voluminous than that of many of his contemporaries and it has been published in good editions in the seventeenth and twentieth centuries. Antoine Chavasse's achievement in dating the vast majority of the sermons in his 1973 edition opened the possibility, which had so far not been exploited, of tracing the development of Leo's thought. Here was my opportunity: though almost everything Leo wrote has an air of finality about it, an impression deliberately conveyed by his prose style, I could now show how his thinking changed over the years and I could attempt to identify the influences upon him. Soteriology, the concrete application of Christology, seemed the best way of approaching him and expounding his thought in a rounded way. When I started work on Leo, the only previous book on him in English had been written nearly sixty years before, by Trevor Jalland. The bibliography in other languages, while not modest, was manageable; it was possible to read almost everything written about him in modern times. So this book is an attempt to bring Leo back into the limelight and an invitation to others to look at him afresh.

Leo belonged to the first generation of bishops for whom his congregation was effectively coterminous with the whole population of the city. It is striking that he talks of Jews and pagans, who certainly existed in Rome in his day, in the past tense as historical figures no longer really relevant to the needs and future of his Church. It

is important to remember that Rome was by far the biggest city in the Roman world and that as we look at the Christianisation of the city it is of special interest to see how the Gospel was presented by its bishop. Leo offered his people a demanding message but not one which overturned social structures and the obligations of rank. He could cheerfully have joined in singing the words of the hymn that God had ordered the estate of the rich man in his castle and the poor man at his gate. The effect of his frequent, repeated preaching on the duties of fasting and almsgiving was to set those established social structures in a new context, not to subvert them. He laid claim to the heritage of Rome, its patriotism and its classical past, and as the greatest Latin orator of his day he deliberately placed himself at the head of his city as the exponent of its moral and spiritual unity.

In calling for a new society bound together in love of Christ, striving for a just relationship among its members, Leo appealed to an account of Christ as the Mediator, bringing God and humanity together in his own person. Christ restored lost justice in his perfect humanity and bestowed divine love and reconciliation upon the people he called to be his own. Unlike Augustine, to whom he was indebted for this understanding of Christ, Leo believed that God wanted to save all humanity and therefore offered his saving grace to all. Thus the Church could aspire to unite the whole city under Christ and in working for this Leo saw no contradiction between the claims of the Gospel and the virtues on which civil society was built.

I have examined Leo's sermons and early letters in great detail, showing how he struggled with and sometimes puzzled over these ideas in the early years of his pontificate. He preached his sermons in annual cycles and no sermon should be read apart from its context in the cycle; all too often, for instance, the Christmas sermons are discussed without adequate recognition of their relationship with the paschal sermons or the sermons for the fasts of the Church's year. While Leo's earliest sermons are a remarkable achievement, it is also possible to observe his development as a theologian by reading the whole corpus in chronological order. This book is the first attempt to use Chavasse's dating of the sermons to explore the evolution of Leo's thought.

Perhaps the most significant claim of the book is that Leo's Tome was far from being his last word in Christology. It was not even

especially characteristic of his theology. It was based on a faulty understanding of Nestorius, which in turn made the document seem Nestorian to Leo's critics at Chalcedon. Instead of settling the Christological disputes that had divided the Christian world for over twenty years, it contributed to bitter divisions which have continued for sixteen centuries. Leo himself tacitly acknowledged this by replacing his Tome, which of course he never failed to declare authoritative, with a second major Christological statement, the Letter to the Palestinian Monks of 453. It is my view that this is not only a far more satisfactory contribution to the controversies surrounding the Council of Chalcedon but also one far more typical of the great themes of Leo's thought as he had developed them over the previous thirteen years.

I am deeply grateful to Abbot Timothy Wright and my community at Ampleforth Abbey for giving me the opportunity to pursue this research. I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr Mark Edwards, who showed enormous patience as well as remarkable learning as he guided me through the doctorate, and to my examiners, Dr Richard Price and Dr Thomas Weinandy, whose comments and criticisms were extremely helpful as I converted the thesis into a book. Among many friends to whom I owe thanks in helping and encouraging me with my work, Dr Alan Dearn and Dr Brian Klug, who read the whole thesis in manuscript and corrected many errors, deserve my special gratitude. I also appreciate the help of Mrs Anna Mayer whose longterm loan of a laptop allowed me to write the thesis in the Lower Reading Room of the Bodleian Library and the Sackler Library: without that practical assistance, I suspect it would never have been written. Sarah and Marius Apetrei were immensely kind, giving their time and expertise in preparing the typescript for the press, and Thomas Fedrick-Illsley's most generous help with the index was invaluable. I am very grateful to them. Above all, I owe more than I can say to Dr Jennifer Cooper, to whom I dedicate this book.

Bernard Green OSB

St Benet's Hall, Oxford
Feast of St Leo the Great, 10 November 2007

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Abbreviations

ACO   *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, ed. E. Schwartz (Berlin, 1914 ff)

CC   *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1954–)

CSEL *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866 ff)

PG   Patrologia Series Graeca et Latina, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1847–66)

PL   Patrologia Series Latina, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1841–64)

SC   Sources Chrétiennes, ed. H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou (Paris, 1941–)

This page intentionally left blank

1

The Historical Background of Leo's Theology: The Making of a Theologian

Introduction

On the day that Leo was consecrated as Bishop of Rome, 29 September 440, he embarked on an ambitious round of preaching. Each year after that, he preached about fifteen sermons on the great feasts and seasons of the Church's calendar. Delivered in an elevated style, these must have been grand events which brought together not only large crowds in the city's basilicas but especially too the educated, urban elites. These sermons offered more than pastoral encouragement. They were major theological statements intended for a sophisticated audience who were following the whole cycle. In the summer and autumn of 447, Leo went further in his theological endeavours and produced two lengthy doctrinal statements in the form of letters to bishops in Spain and Sicily. These foreshadowed his most famous theological work, the Tome to Flavian, published in the summer of 449. Sermons and letters were Leo's two theological genres: authoritative public statements of doctrine. Unlike his great mentors and his contemporaries—Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Cyril, Theodoret—he never wrote scriptural commentaries or exegetical homilies. He was not addressing that part of a congregation who would turn up to hear lecture courses on scripture. Nor, unlike many of his contemporaries, did he publish sermons for the catechumens preparing for baptism. His audience was never a select minority: it was his city and the world. Since no previous pope had produced theological work in this way, we must first try and establish Leo's motives in preaching and writing. The explanation can be found in

the story of the conversion of Rome and the development of papal ascendancy in the city and more broadly across the West during the preceding seventy years.

The Christianisation of Rome

Rome in the late fourth and early fifth century was a most unusual city. With all its historical prestige, it boasted the finest pagan monuments in the world. Its population still numbered hundreds of thousands, perhaps half a million people[1] and it was a cultural and educational centre led by the senatorial aristocracy. Yet it had ceased to be the capital of the Empire during the third century and it stood alone in central and southern Italy where there were very few cities of significant size. The only other important cities in the peninsula were in the north, in the province of Liguria and Aemilia. Both in its internal government and in its economic relationship with its hinterland, it was unique. For Christians, its claims to apostolic foundation, its noble heritage of martyrdom, and exceptional network of suburban shrines gave Rome unchallengeable eminence. Rome's size and history meant that the patterns of worship and allegiance of its Church had to be sharply different from elsewhere. None of the great dioceses of the East—Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople—or of the West—Carthage or Milan—had evolved in the same way.

Christianity had been rooted in working-class districts of the city such as Trastevere or Porta Capena for centuries. All the evidence indicates that Christianity originated as a faith among the poor.[2] There is no reason to think that the Church lost control of working-class areas or failed to further their hold on them in the fourth century. The upper classes had certainly embraced the public practice of Christianity in the first decades of the fifth century[3] and some among them had been deeply affected by the ascetic movement. It is not surprising that the monumental centre of the city remained

---

[1] B. Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 312–609* (Edinburgh, 2000), 14–5.

[2] P. Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London, 2003), 19–66.

[3] M. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 73–81.

untouched by Christian building, but it does seem odd that there was little attempt to build new churches where people lived.[4] Within the walls, the old house churches were rebuilt, usually retaining the name of the original donor or owner though often incorporating references to the current pope (the *titulus*). These were not huge buildings but consisted of a pastoral complex, including the church, classrooms, store rooms, and offices. By the end of the fourth century, there were twenty *tituli* evenly distributed around the city. These could offer space for Sunday worship to a mere 10,000–20,000 people. It would seem that there ought to have been an urgent push to build more but, by the mid-fifth century, there were only twenty-five. There was no overall plan: despite papal involvement in some of these projects, they often owed more to local initiatives and private benefactions.

Quite separate from these was the construction of basilicas, much bigger buildings, outside the walls, distant from the densely populated parts of the city. Only the Lateran, built in the south-eastern aristocratic green belt, and its near neighbour the basilica of the Sessorian palace (later Sta Croce in Gerusalemme), were within the walls. These were imperial foundations, paid for from the private finances of the royal family. By the early fifth century they constituted a formidable circle of magnificent and in several cases enormous buildings: the Lateran and Sessorian, St Peter's, Sta Agnese, S Lorenzo, SS Marcelllino e Pietro, S Sebastiano, and St Paul's. The Lateran and St Peter's could each hold between 4,000 and 5,000 people. These basilicas had differing functions—cemetery churches, martyr shrines, royal mausolea. Again, their construction did not follow one grand plan executed systematically over the course of the century. While they placed the popes in the debt of the imperial family at almost all papal functions, they had not supplied the people with convenient, big places of worship.

This must imply that either the Christianisation of the bulk of the population, in the sense of regular liturgical worship, had not

---

[4] Neither Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity*, 30–1 nor R. Krautheimer, *Rome: Portrait of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 2000), 33–5, notice the inadequacy of this church provision; for the building projects of the fourth and early fifth centuries, see J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 70–157; R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley, CA, 1983), 16–40, 96–103.

proceeded very far or that most Christians were not expected to go to church every Sunday.[5] Instead, popular participation in the ritual life of the Church must have taken the form of assemblies on major festivals at the great basilicas or in the form of pilgrimages to martyr shrines outside the city or even by watching or taking part in papal processions. In other words, the fact that the Church leadership did not build more *tituli* need not mean that the people were untouched by Christianity or that the leadership was uninterested in evangelisation; it might suggest, rather, that the leadership had devised other ways of winning the allegiance of the public, ways that revolved around particular places and particular days. Vital to this strategy were the shrines of the martyrs outside the city.

The cults of the martyrs had long provided the Church of Rome with holy places and pilgrimage shrines, but they were predominantly outside the city walls and even beyond the suburbs. In addition to the shrines with obvious papal associations such as the tombs of Peter on the Vatican, Paul on the Via Ostiensis, or the so-called papal crypt at the catacomb of St Callistus on the Via Appia, all the catacombs had been associated with the popes from at least the time of Fabian (236–50).[6] The Christian cemeteries became Church property in the first part of the third century and were extensively renovated and developed. Building work at the cemeteries continued throughout the fourth century. Damasus (366–84)[7] was the most significant figure in putting the different martyr shrines into one, centrally approved, coherent configuration, stamped with his personal *epigrammata*. The shrines of the saints have been rightly seen as central to Christian practice in Rome but, rather than turning the city inside out, establishing a Christian identity at odds with traditional civic identity,[8] Damasus was uniting the people of the city with their ancient holy places in the suburbs under papal superintendence. It is striking that all the popes before Leo were buried at the old cemeteries along the

---

[5] Though congregations were diverse, low attendance was a widespread phenomenon: see R. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice 313–450* (Oxford, 2006), 139–46.

[6] P. Testini, *Le catacombe e gli antichi cimiteri in Roma* (Bologna, 1966).

[7] Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 148–55.

[8] *Pace* P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), 42–3, 45–8, 88–9.

roads leading from the city.[9] By placing the shrines of the martyrs and the sacred burial places of the past under the aegis of the popes, they not only guaranteed that the popular faith of the people would be under official control, they also put themselves in a position to control the conduct of the people visiting the sanctuaries. Notoriously, in some places martyr shrines lent themselves to unruly behaviour. Even the old custom of drinking at the tombs of the dead was judged open to accusations of superstition. The popes, though not entirely successful in stopping all ceremonial drinking, were more effective than their African colleagues in asserting control of the holy places.[10]

The early fifth-century popes, therefore, did not have a reputation as great builders. They exercised their leadership of the Church chiefly through the shrines of the martyrs and imperial basilicas. But a series of bold new building projects was launched in the pontificate of Sixtus III, Leo's predecessor, which was to last for forty years.[11] Under papal direction, new basilicas and chapels were built and old ones refurbished. This produced Sta Maria Maggiore, the Lateran baptistery, the decoration of St Paul's, the oratory of Sta Croce in the Lateran, and S Stefano Rotondo. These were the last great buildings put up in Rome until the end of the eighth century.[12] These buildings form a homogeneous group in the very high quality of their design and finish. They make up a remarkable classical revival, pioneered by the popes. The project, which was sustained over four pontificates, was anticipated by but contrasts with Sta Sabina built in the 420s and early 430s. Sta Sabina was a *titulus* that was also a large basilica, the donation of a rich priest, built in a very grand but semi-classical style and brought under the umbrella of papal patronage in its dedicatory inscription. Sta Maria Maggiore, by contrast, was an exclusively papal scheme and provided the popes for the first time with a basilica really worthy of the name. It could rival the Basilica Ulpia, built by Trajan

---

[9] J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford, 1986), passim.

[10] On behaviour at Roman shrines, see Augustine, *Ep* 29.10, *CSEL* 34, 120–1; when Monica was stopped from drinking at the shrines in Milan, it was obviously a new ban, cf. *Conf* 6.2.2, *CC* 27, 74–5.

[11] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, 103–21, and 'The Architecture of Sixtus III: A Fifth-Century Renascence?' in M. Meiss (ed.), *De Artibus Opuscula XL Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York, 1961), 291–302.

[12] B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300–850* (Oxford, 1984), 58–9.

in his forum not only as a grand law court but also as the scene of imperial largesse and the cancelling of debts, or Domitian's audience hall on the Palatine where the emperors had held court. This building programme was a statement that the popes were now the bearers of the classical heritage in a Rome which imperial troops had proved unable to protect in 410. With Sta Maria Maggiore, the popes had also provided themselves a massive new basilica far more centrally located than the Lateran.[13]

This building programme can be seen as the Roman version of Ambrose's and his circle's determination to build in northern Italy. The bishop needed to be seen as constructing his own basilica for the building was itself an expression of his person. The basilicas of St Peter and St Paul were sanctified and intimately associated with the popes by the presence of the apostolic relics but the Lateran was devoid of such associations. This makes sense of the otherwise somewhat puzzling decision to build another large basilica on the Esquiline. It provided an alternative venue for great papal ceremonies both more central than the remote Lateran and more personally identified with the popes themselves.

It is of course striking that none of these churches was a replacement of a previous structure, let alone a temple, though some secular buildings began to be adapted in the late fifth century.[14] Overall, there was no attempt to overlay the religious or civil topography of Rome. The sacred heart of the city was left, the temples empty but preserved. The Church set up an alternative, different topography which said several things about the Christian view of Rome: the shrines of martyrs and above all St Peter were the new rival centres. The catacombs, the cemeteries, and the tombs and graves for which new churches such as Sta Agnese were built offered a very different conception of the meaning of death from the classical pagan one. The *tituli* were mostly established where people lived but bigger buildings were remote, places of pilgrimage or procession, where the bishop would celebrate his office as leader of the people.

Just as the buildings did not form a Christian palimpsest upon the pagan past but rather constructed an alternative urban map, so

---

[13] Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, 118–21.
[14] Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, 91.

too the Christian feasts and fasts were not superimposed upon the pagan festivals but created an entirely different sense of the shape of the year.[15] The mid-fourth century calendar still commemorated 177 festivals with games and circuses and 54 without. The games were accompanied by religious rites that made them part of the Roman civic religion and 69 of them celebrated days associated with Roman gods.[16] The Christianisation of the calendar was largely an act of state: Theodosius obliterated all the pagan holidays in 389 and made Sundays and the Easter festival the major religious feasts of the year; he banned the pagan sacrifices and prohibited access to the temples in 391. In 399, a law stripped the games and circuses of their religious rites and rendered them officially neutral.[17] By the mid-fifth century, the calendar had been transformed. Sundays and the greatest Christian feasts were now the principal holidays while the dates still kept from the old pagan calendar were the national or civic historical commemorations rather than the religious or mytho-logical ones. The games, which went on into the sixth century, were de-paganised but, interestingly, were never converted into Christian festivals.

Just as the new Christian topography was marked and adorned with great buildings, so the new Christian calendar needed to be marked and adorned too. Just as the popes took over the project of designing and developing the Christian topography of the city from imperial and private benefactions, so the popes too took over the calendar from the bare legal decisions made in the imperial court. This explains why, when Leo chose to preach and make a bid to be the episcopal leader in Italy, he decided to preach on the calendar. The liturgical year was still only newly developing but he proved its first systematic commentator. His sermons, many of them grand attempts at fine oratory lit by rhythmic alliteration and assonance and sonorous word patterns, were the rhetorical equivalent of the

[15] M.R. Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1990). Her account there on pp. 236–44 of the Christianisation of the calendar is to be preferred to her discussion in 'The Christianization of Sacred Time and Sacred Space', in W.V. Harris (ed.), *The Trans-formations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI, 1999), 123–34, where she suggests that the Christian calendar overlay the pagan in a way quite different from the topographic separation of Christian and pagan holy sites.

[16] Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 178–9.   [17] Ibid. 236–9.

neo-classical programme embarked on by his predecessor. The Christian pattern of the year was now dignified and expounded with great oratory in the basilicas that shaped the Christian map of the city.

   Leo certainly preached and celebrated in different basilicas on particular days—Easter, presumably, in the Lateran; Christmas morning, the Saturday vigil in Ember weeks, and probably SS Peter and Paul in St Peter's. But it would look as though the choosing of churches for other celebrations was ad hoc—as when he preached against Eutyches in Sta Anastasia. His successor, Hilary, who had been his deacon and was closely involved in his policies and continued the building programme with the exquisite oratory of Sta Croce at the Lateran, was the first to allocate vessels to the churches for stational liturgies.[18] The development of the stational liturgy over the fifth and sixth centuries with regular celebrations in fixed churches—perhaps already inchoate in Leo's time—brought the topography and calendar of Christian Rome together.[19]

   Neither Leo's decision to preach on the great feasts and seasons of the year, therefore, nor the elevated, classical style in which his sermons were delivered need cause any surprise given the particular way that the papacy had developed its relationship with the huge population of the Church of Rome. But there were further, pressing reasons for his adoption of a preaching programme, which can be traced back to the restoration of the papacy by Damasus, to the impact in Italy of Ambrose, and to the recent history of the papacy in Rome.

The Restoration of the Papacy, 366–99

The disputed election of 366 saw the papacy at its lowest point. A century earlier,[20] martyrs and confessors together with its sheer size and complex organisation brought great prestige to the See of Rome

---

[18] *Liber Pontificalis*: L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber Pontificalis: Texte, Introduction et Commentaire*, vol 1 (Paris, 1959), 234.

[19] J. F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome, 1987), 105–66.

[20] See J.N.D. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford, 1986) and E. Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, vol 1 (Tübingen, 1930), 48–94.

which successfully handled the problems of the lapsed and established itself as a court of appeal for other Churches. Rome emerged stronger from the last great persecution than many Churches. But, despite Julius' (337–52) vigorous support of Athanasius, it could not escape the disruption of the Arian controversy. Liberius (352–66)[21] initially resisted imperial pressure to condemn Athanasius but at last, in exile and fearing divisions in the Roman Church where his archdeacon had been elected bishop in his absence, he capitulated in 357. On returning to Rome, he was greeted rapturously and his rival withdrew to the suburbs. Nevertheless, when Liberius died in 366, the Church split in a bloody schism.[22] Damasus (366–84)[23] emerged victorious, but 137 people were killed in a three-day battle for control of one of the basilicas.

The bloodshed was not quickly forgotten, but in the long run this schism strengthened episcopal power in Rome.[24] Damasus spent the next eighteen years restoring the Church's and his own damaged reputations.[25] He was a Roman: a deacon before his elevation and the son of a priest. Within the city, his energy yielded success. Churches were built,[26] catacombs restored,[27] the cults of the martyrs brought under central papal control,[28] the liturgy developed, and the people united in tighter discipline.[29] Moving easily in aristocratic circles and with Jerome as his secretary, Damasus added to the prestige of the Apostolic See (a title first used at a synod in 378) if not to its name for sanctity. Yet, though Theodosius' edict of 380 defined the Christianity of the Empire as the faith of Damasus of Rome and Peter of Alexandria, his pontificate saw little extension of papal influence

[21] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 166–95; C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte* (Rome, 1976), 237–65.

[22] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 408–18.

[23] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 196–256.

[24] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 419–23.

[25] For Damasus' work in Rome, see Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 137–57; for Christian society under Damasus and the ascetical movement see J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London, 1975), 80–115.

[26] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 461–514.   [27] Ibid. 514–57.

[28] Sites associated with the martyrs were marked with verses written by him and inscribed on marble tablets by Filocalus; see A. Ferrua, *Epigrammata Damasiana* (Rome, 1942); see Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 595–624.

[29] Ibid. 576–95.

beyond the bounds of the diocese.[30] He failed to dislodge Auxentius
of Milan, in spite of his Arian beliefs, and was then eclipsed by
Auxentius' successor Ambrose.[31] It caused no surprise, for instance,
that it was Ambrose, not Damasus, who led the charge in the dispute
over the Altar of Victory in the Senate House in 384. He played no
part in the Council of Constantinople in 381, though the following
year he responded to its elevation of Constantinople to a primacy
of honour next after Rome by proclaiming at a Roman synod that
only Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch exercised multi-provincial juris-
dictions. He misread the state of affairs in the East by supporting
Paulinus as Bishop of Antioch, prolonging splits without serving the
victory of Nicene orthodoxy, against the better judgment of Basil of
Caesarea.

Damasus' principal achievement, therefore, lay within the city of
Rome. Though dogged by unsavoury rumours, he carried the dig-
nity of his office with flair. His literary pretensions, his easy man-
ner in the highest society—he was nicknamed 'the matrons' ear
tickler'[32]—matched the prestige and wealth attached to his position.
This however presented its own challenge. As they embraced lux-
ury and grandeur, Damasus and his clergy risked forfeiting spiri-
tual authority. Towards the end of Damasus' pontificate, one of his
priests, commonly known as Ambrosiaster, attacked the outlook and
behaviour of the city's deacons,[33] whom he accused of arrogance
and presumption, criticisms that were matched by Jerome in *Ep* 146.
Ambrosiaster also attacked senior clergy who were vain and avari-
cious.[34] His was not a lone voice. At the same time, Jerome lambasted
the behaviour of the Roman clergy with their stylish clothes and
footwear, their jewellery and scents and coiffures, gossiping in the
drawing rooms of rich women, dropping heavy hints about articles
of furniture they would like to take home with them.[35] What matters
here is less the accuracy or exaggerations of Ambrosiaster's jeremiad

[30] Ibid. 729–872.   [31] Ibid. 887–909.

[32] *Matronarum auriscalpius*: *Collectio Avellana, Ep* 1 (*CSEL* 35.4).

[33] L. Speller, 'Conflict and Controversy in Ambrosiaster' (unpublished DPhil the-
sis, University of Oxford, 1980), 122–8.

[34] Ibid. 138–40; D.G. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christian-
ity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford, 2007), 159–70.

[35] *Ep* 22.28, *CSEL* 54, 185–6.

or Jerome's satirical sketch, than that two contemporary but very different writers were so forthright in condemning Damasus' leading clergy. Ambrosiaster was a reformer, who called for clerical celibacy,[36] but took a positive view of marriage.[37] Jerome, by contrast, spoke for a small but powerful element in the Christian aristocracy whose ascetical agenda challenged the very credibility of the leadership of the Roman Church.[38]

Though the closing decades of the fourth century saw the gradual surrender of the pagan Roman aristocracy to the Christian faith,[39] in the year that Jerome wrote that famous letter, 384, the Roman Church was under attack from a different direction, from aristocratic and intellectual paganism, as the Prefect of Rome, Symmachus, called for the restoration of the Altar of Victory in the Senate. In that same year, another distinguished pagan, Praetextatus, was Praetorian Prefect of Italy and was due to crown his career with the consulship when death intervened, provoking widespread public lament. Jerome was tartly confident he had gone straight to hell.[40] According to him, Praetextatus used to joke with Damasus, 'Make me bishop of Rome and I will become a Christian straightaway.'[41] At this time, Ammianus Marcellinus was in Rome writing his history. Describing the violence that attended Damasus' accession in 366, the last great pagan historian could not resist observing that, considering the ostentatious luxury of the Roman Church, it was not surprising that people would go to such lengths to secure control of it.[42]

Thus, Damasus' triumph in Rome was vulnerable to criticism from powerful aristocratic voices both within and without the Church. He had not found a satisfactory balance between the harsh asceticism

---

[36] Speller, 'Conflict and Controversy in Ambrosiaster,' 134–8.
[37] Ibid. 162–71.   [38] Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 260–320.
[39] Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy*; P. Brown, 'Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman Aristocracy,' *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine* (London, 1972), 161–82; Hunter, *Marriage*, 63–74; a celebrated late example of a convert aristocrat was the uncle of Melania the Younger, Volusianus, correspondent of Augustine and presumably acquaintance of Leo who was converted by Proclus in Constantinople in 437, see A. Chastignol, 'Le Senateur Volusien et la conversion d'une famille de l'aristocratie romaine au bas-empire,' *Revue des études anciennes*, 58 (1956), 241–53.
[40] *Ep* 23.2–3, *CSEL* 212–13.   [41] *C Johannem Hierosolymitanum*, 8 PL, 23.361.
[42] *Res Gestae*, 27.3, W. Seyfarth (ed.), *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum Gestarum Libri qui Supersunt*, vol 2 (Leipzig, 1978), 36.

preached by Jerome and the standards of the Roman elite.[43] By contrast, much of Ambrose's strength in Milan came from his towering moral integrity, his harnessing of the ascetic movement to his own episcopal authority, and, at the same time, his outflanking any potential cultured despisers by harnessing also to his episcopal authority the literature and mores of the classical past. Future bishops of Rome would have to take note of Ambrose's achievement to assure their ascendancy over their city.

Damasus had restored the fortunes of the papacy within the city, but it fell to his successors to raise the reputation and influence of the Apostolic See beyond Rome and Italy. Siricius (384–99),[44] Roman by birth and one of Damasus' deacons, represented continuity and development in policy. Though he too was overshadowed for most of his pontificate by Ambrose of Milan, he developed the papacy's role as a court of appeal. He started issuing decretals, legal judgments in a style imitative of the imperial court. He was more successful than Damasus in his policy towards Antioch, successfully persuading a synod at Caesarea in Palestine to recognise Flavian rather than Evagrius. His most notable innovation, which was to shape papal policy for the next two centuries, was to appoint the Bishop of Thessalonica as his delegate in Illyricum in 385 with the right to authorise all episcopal appointments in the prefecture.[45] Illyricum was one of the four prefectures into which Constantine divided the Empire in 324. It was assigned to the West, under a praetorian prefect resident at Sirmium. The Emperor Theodosius divided the prefecture: the East, with its praetorian prefect resident at Thessalonica, consisted of the two dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia (which included Greece); the West was one diocese under a vicar of the Prefect of Italy based at Sirmium. He then transferred East Illyricum to the eastern half of the Empire. Siricius had thus set up a structure by which papal interests could be maintained against the new power of Constantinople.

---

[43] Hunter, *Marriage*, 51–83.

[44] Caspar presents this whole era as that of Ambrose's ascendancy: *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 257–85.

[45] T. Jalland, *The Life and Times of St Leo the Great* (London, 1941), 192–204; for a fuller account, see Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 1069–147.

It is no accident that his first decretal,[46] written in 385, included instructions about the age at which men could be admitted to the different orders and advocating clerical celibacy. He also excommunicated Jovinian, though his voice was only one in a chorus made up of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. This, however, did not mark a rapprochement with the ascetic movement of which he remained suspicious, having got rid of Jerome[47] and later snubbing Paulinus of Nola.[48]

The two long pontificates of Damasus and Siricius which spanned thirty-three years saw the gradual restoration not only of unity and papal control in the Church of Rome but also of the prestige and wider influence of the papacy. As the popes commanded ever greater church wealth and occupied an ever more elevated position in society, they could not continue to be matrons' ear-ticklers but would have to find some new accommodation with the ascetical aspirations which appealed to an influential though small minority of their flock. Leo was, in the long run, to be the beneficiary of gradual the re-drawing of the image of a bishop and the exploration of how the Church should relate to society which demanded a careful positioning of the papacy and the Roman Church vis-à-vis the civic ideals of classical society and the ascetical ideals that had been given sharper definition by the rise of monasticism. That process owed everything to Ambrose.

The Ascendancy and Impact of Ambrose

Almost all the cities and towns of any importance in fourth and fifth-century Italy lay in the great plain between the Alps and Apennines, the province of Liguria and Aemilia. Here, as Bishop of Milan from 374 to 397, Ambrose achieved a remarkable ascendancy. Before his time, Christianity's penetration into northern Italy had been patchy and slow and the patterns of influence and authority among the bishops had been fluid.[49] It was Ambrose who welded the hierarchies

---

[46] PL 13.1132–47.   [47] Kelly, *Jerome*, 112–15; Hunter, *Marriage*, 208–19.

[48] D.E. Trout, *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, CA, 1999), 114–15; cf. also, 54.

[49] M. Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed: Social Environment and Religious Change in Northern Italy, AD 200–400* (Oxford, 1999), 72–105, 137–47; R. Lizzi Testa,

of the northern cities together, who gave them a model of how to convert and dominate a city, and supplied a pattern of how a bishop should conduct himself in office and in private. Before his time, the papacy had never exercised any significant influence in northern Italy.[50] Ambrose's relationship with Rome was one of his strongest advantages—in the North, his was the Roman voice; in Rome, he was *noster Ambrosius*[51]—but during his lifetime his towering gifts prevented the resurgent papacy of Damasus and Siricius gaining power beyond suburbicarian Italy. On the other hand, by constructing patterns of relationships between the bishops and changing their expectations, he created the opportunity for Roman domination after his death.

As the Church was transformed in size, wealth, and organisation in the fourth century, the functions of a bishop had evolved in complexity but had not fundamentally changed in kind. What did change was the bishop's role in civic society. Tirelessly, in his correspondence, by his personal example, and even in a major treatise devoted to the subject written in the late 380s, his *De Officiis*,[52] Ambrose laid down a template of episcopal practice and conduct. Bishops in his mould, while being more sympathetic to monasticism and the role of asceticism in clerical life,[53] were preachers and builders, civic leaders, heirs of the Roman tradition of public life striving to combine pragmatism and idealism, rhetoric and philosophy, utility and truth. His bishops were the Christian expression of Cicero's ideal of the orator, where civic virtue was realised in the Christian Gospel.

Ambrose worked hard to impress this episcopal style on the bishops of the region.[54] He was responsible for or at the very least

---

'Christianization and Conversion in Northern Italy,' in A. Kreider (ed.), *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh, 2001), 47–95, esp. 47–73.

[50] Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed*, 153–8.

[51] Jerome, *Ep* 22.22, *CSEL* 54, 174–5.

[52] I. Davidson (ed.), *Ambrose: De Officiis*, 2 vols (Oxford, 2001); J. Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London, 1999), 157–69.

[53] Hunter, *Marriage*, 219–24.

[54] N.B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), 276–90; R. Lizzi, 'Ambrose's Contemporaries in the Christianization of Northern Italy,' *Journal of Roman Studies*, 80 (1990), 156–73; Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed*, 147–53; Lizzi Testa, 'Christianization and Conversion,' 78–82.

influential in a number of key elections, such as those of Vigilius of Trent, Chromatius of Aquileia, Gaudentius of Brescia, Felix of Bologna, Theodolus of Modena, Honoratus of Vercelli. They formed a circle around him, moulded by his innovative practice of maintaining a huge correspondence.[55] As the cities of northern Italy were gradually transformed by Christianity, so the bishops were no longer merely the leaders of substantial urban minorities. They were now the heads of Christian cities where the civic population had effectively become their flock. Ambrose taught them to act in concert and to develop strategies for the Christianisation of their cities and the consolidation of the Church's influence.

After the death of Ambrose, none of his successors equalled his stature or could assume his position of leadership in northern Italy. It fell instead to the papacy to take up the reins of influence and control in the North. But this was a papacy itself affected by Ambrose's vision of the episcopal calling. First under Anastasius (399–401)[56] and then under Innocent (401–17),[57] the papacy realigned itself with the ascetical and monastic movement. Under Innocent, the papacy achieved effective metropolitan authority over the north of Italy and Illyricum. Though Innocent was himself now overshadowed in the West as a theologian by the moral and intellectual genius of Augustine, he gained for the papacy a legal and administrative supremacy beyond suburbicarian Italy unknown to his predecessors.

Anastasius, by birth a Roman, seems to have been an old man of considerable moral stature. For Jerome, he was *vir insignis*: whereas Jerome had been critical of Damasus, personally hostile to Ambrose, and dismissive of Siricius, he was an admirer of Anastasius.[58] Another beneficiary of the realignment with asceticism was Paulinus of Nola.[59] Patronage of the leaders of Western asceticism would affect the papacy's future pastoral policy as well as its connections within the ranks of the aristocracy.

Despite the efforts of Damasus and Siricius, however, the papal curia lacked a sound theological touch. Anastasius showed himself indecisive in the Origenist crisis of 399, which divided the ascetic

[55] Ninety-one letters survive, clearly only a small proportion of a far larger number.
[56] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 285–7.   [57] Ibid. 296–343.
[58] Kelly, *Jerome*, 246–9; Hunter, *Marriage*, 234–42.
[59] Trout, *Paulinus of Nola*, 115.

movement, and in the question of the reconciliation of Donatist clergy in 401, both issues that were presented to him for judgment. In matters of jurisdiction, on the other hand, he had no hesitations. He continued his predecessors' policy of maintaining a grip on East Illyricum through the Bishop of Thessalonica. Anastasius' successor Innocent was his protégé;[60] he had also probably served him as deacon. He brought these policies to fruition, proving the most adept and successful pontiff since Julius half a century before.[61] His 36 decretals are a sign of his energetic engagement with the needs of the Church. He established papal control over the whole Italian peninsula, controlling episcopal elections and the conduct of ecclesiastical life.[62] He was bold in supporting John Chrysostom at his deposition in 404, challenging all three Eastern patriarchs as well as the imperial court at Constantinople. He could not save Chrysostom but he did succeed in restoring his posthumous reputation. After the death of Porphyry of Antioch in 413, his successor Alexander made peace with Innocent and included Chrysostom in the diptychs, a precedent eventually followed in Constantinople and even Alexandria. He was equally willing to tackle John of Jerusalem in 416 for his failure to prevent the destruction of Jerome's monastery in Bethlehem. He developed Siricius' policy in Illyricum but was more than ready to intervene and override his vicar at Thessalonica if need be.[63]

The most dramatic event of Innocent's pontificate was the sack of Rome in 410. When the city was threatened, he apparently sanctioned the offering of pagan sacrifices, so long as the rites were performed in private. When the city fell, he was away at Ravenna, leading a deputation to negotiate with the Emperor Honorius and he did not return until 412. The ambiguity of these events is highly suggestive: his control over the paganism surviving among the city's elite was far less than he might have wanted, yet it was to him that they turned for sanction nevertheless; it was he who represented the city in its crisis,

[60] The claim that he was his son, based on Jerome, *Ep* 130.16, *CSEL* 56, 196–7, is a canard; Innocent calls Celestine his son, *Ep* 25.8, PL 20.560, and Leo calls Sixtus his son, *Ep* 28, TD 9, 33.
[61] Caspar remarks that compared with Augustine, whose human and spiritual stature he lacked, he was, 'vielmehr wie ein Marmorbild: fest, klar—und kalt,' *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 343.
[62] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 909–33.
[63] Jalland, *Life and Times of St Leo the Great*, 194–6.

but his intervention was ineffectual and distanced him from his flock. But there is no trace of criticism of or dissent from Innocent's actions either at Rome or in the wider world.

At his death in 417, Innocent's reputation stood very high. The papacy had stepped into the vacuum left in northern Italy by Ambrose's death. They had learned the great lessons of Ambrose's episcopal style and his vision of the relationship of Church and society. This was the Church where Leo first served as a young man; Innocent's manner and agenda was later to be his. Leo was to put forward a soteriology for the citizen who could find salvation in the life of the Church that in no way undermined his domestic and civic responsibilities, a vision of the good Christian that owed much to Ambrose and offered a practical recipe for the conversion of the city. The achievements of the previous fifty years were to be imperilled, however, by Innocent's successor who threw the Roman Church into division and turmoil. Leo's own sermons and letters as pope can be seen as a determined statement that the crisis of 418–19 had been buried.

Zosimus and the Crisis of 418–19

Leo first comes into view in the summer of 418, at the worst time of crisis for the papacy in fifty years. The previous year, in response to petitions from the North African bishops, Innocent had condemned Pelagius and Caelestius.[64] This judgment had been greeted by Augustine with his oft-quoted expression of delight, *causa finita est*.[65] But Innocent had died less that than two months later and his successor Zosimus[66] had convened a new synod to re-open the case, issuing an entirely different verdict in September 417, which absolved Caelestius and Pelagius.[67] Zosimus was an outsider in Roman clerical

---

[64] He announced the verdict of a Roman synod in three letters, *Epp* 29, 30, 31, dated 27 Jan. 417: PL 20.582–8, 20.588–93, 20.593–7; see O. Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius: die theologische Position der römischen Bischöfe im pelagianischen Streit in den Jahren 411–432* (Stuttgart, 1975), 124–33.

[65] 'The case is concluded,' *Serm* 131.10, PL 38.734.

[66] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 344–60.

[67] Announced in two letters, *Epp* 2 and 3, the second of which was dated 21 Sep. 417: PL 20.649–54, 20.654–61; Augustine's sermon in which he proclaimed *causa*

circles, a Greek, recommended to Innocent by John Chrysostom and promoted beyond his talents. His revision of the judgment against Pelagianism was well-meaning but foolish. Forceful protests from North Africa pushed Zosimus into a humiliating reversal in the spring of 418; though he blustered with strong words about the authority of the Holy See, the Pope had to give way and confirm the judgment of his predecessor.[68] Zosimus had only just pre-empted an imperial edict issued from Ravenna, supporting the Africans and condemning Pelagius and Caelestius.[69] In the summer, he produced a long circular letter to the churches, definitively sanctioning the condemnation of Caelestius and Pelagius.[70]

Zosimus' clumsiness had exposed the Roman curia as a vacillating, unreliable court, outmatched in theological insight and consistency both by the North African bishops and by the imperial court at Ravenna. This need not be set in a context of rivalry between these centres of power. The Catholic bishops of North Africa did not resent Roman interference in their affairs but rather found Rome a useful court of appeal to resolve disputes more conveniently settled far from home—so much so that it was the papal curia that tried to limit appeals, so overwhelmed were they with business.[71] But the damage to Rome in 418 was nonetheless enormous. When Zosimus was forced to sing his recantation, prominent Roman clerics hurried to join in the chorus. Sixtus, a leading priest, had been suspect of dubious views on Pelagianism. He wrote to Aurelius of Carthage assuring him of his orthodoxy. He sent the letter by the hand of Leo,[72] who was then an acolyte and presumably thus in his twenties,

---

finita est was, ironically, delivered two days later, on 23 September; a phrase which is often quoted as proof of Augustine's belief in papal authority in fact illustrated better the vagaries of papal judgments; see J.E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, MA, 1997), 126–30; Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 151–64, 302–6.

[68]   Zosimus, *Ep*, 12 *CSEL*, 35, 115–17.

[69]   *PL* 56.490–3; Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 196–204.

[70]   *CSEL* 57, 159; Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 209–18, 307–8.

[71]   This is shown convincingly by Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 93–100, 148–53, 160–82.

[72]   Augustine, *Ep* 191.1, *CSEL* 57, 163. Though there is no concrete evidence that this Leo is the future pope, it is overwhelmingly likely: such a delicate mission would have been entrusted to someone reliable and able; the dates fit—a man who was an acolyte in 418 could have been archdeacon by 430; there is thus only one other known

probably Tuscan by birth[73] but long enough established in Rome that he could later describe it as his native city.[74] Sixtus' letter was sufficiently important for it to be circulated by Augustine.[75] Sixtus also wrote to Augustine and Alypius a letter conveyed by Firmus,[76] Augustine's regular agent in dealing with Jerome.[77] At the same time, Celestine the deacon wrote to Augustine, expressing his affectionate loyalty, sending the letter by the hand of the junior cleric Projectus,[78] and Marius Mercator sent Augustine two letters, one of which included a refutation of Pelagianism.[79] Leo was thus a minor but clearly trusted player in a flurry of diplomatic activity by notable Roman clergy anxious to dissociate themselves from Zosimus' earlier policy and to establish an alliance with Augustine. It is no coincidence that all these Roman figures were later to be very important: three popes, Celestine, Sixtus, and Leo; Celestine's agent in Constantinople, Mercator;[80] Celestine's representative at Ephesus, Bishop Projectus.[81]

Augustine replied to Sixtus, Celestine, and Mercator in letters carried by his acolyte Albinus and then sent a much longer letter to Sixtus with Firmus. The role of Firmus is highly suggestive: what was he doing in Rome? Was he negotiating on Augustine's behalf and assuring support amongst the clerical leadership? The range of Augustine's diplomatic activity can be judged from the extensive travels that Alypius conducted on Augustine's behalf.[82] It is likely that Alypius was in contact with Boniface, Zosimus' eventual successor. It is striking how quickly Augustine rallied to support Boniface and acquitted him of any hint of ambition or intrigue after the disputed election of

Leo that could possibly have been a Roman acolyte in 418, a priest buried at St Paul's outside the Walls whose 20-year-old daughter was interred in his tomb in October 445, so while the date of his death is unknown it can be presumed that he became a priest after 425, but his marriage makes it unlikely that he had been part of the clerical bureaucracy, cf. Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, vol 2, 1272.

[73] *Lib Pont* (Duchesne, 238).   [74] For example Leo, *Ep* 31.4, *ACO* II.4, 14.
[75] Augustine, *Ep* 194, *CSEL* 57, 176–7.   [76] Augustine, *Ep* 191, *CSEL* 57, 163.
[77] Mandouze, *Pros* 458–9.   [78] Augustine, *Ep* 192, *CSEL* 57, 165.
[79] Augustine, *Ep* 193, *CSEL* 57, 167–8.
[80] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, vol. 2, 1499–504.
[81] An almost certain identification: ibid. 1854–7.
[82] Augustine, *Contra Julianum Opus Imperfectum*, 1.42, 3.35, *CSEL* 85/1, 30–1, 374–5; cf. Mandouze, *Pros* 62–4.

418–19.[83] This would be puzzling[84] unless Augustine had already been in close touch with elements in the Roman Church unhappy with Zosimus' conduct of affairs in 418. There is enough evidence here to suggest the formation of a party aligned to Augustine which would seize control of the Roman Church after Zosimus' untimely death and dominate it for a generation.

Unfortunately for Zosimus, the case of Caelestius and Pelagius had not plumbed the depths of his ineptitude. He sought revenge over the African bishops for his humiliation and their appeal to Ravenna by reinstating Apiarius, a priest deposed by Bishop Urbanus of Sicca Veneria, insisting furthermore that they should not appeal to the imperial court.[85] The Apiarius case exposed Zosimus to further humiliation as the Africans showed that he had based his claims on canons that he mistakenly attributed to Nicea.[86] The full scale of the disaster of Zosimus' pontificate thus only became apparent after his death. What seemed at the time his one really well-considered, forward-looking move, made right at the start of his pontificate, elevating Patroclus of Arles to be the metropolitan of the provinces of Vienne and the two Narbonnes, gradually proved a mistake. Instead of Arles functioning as a papal vicariate, controlling the difficult bishops of southern Gaul, it began to assert its own independence while provoking dissent rather than promoting unity.[87]

More immediately, the death of Zosimus at the end of 418 threw the Roman Church into chaos, with a divided election and a bitter schism that was resolved only by imperial intervention. The deacons chose the archdeacon, Eulalius, probably another Greek, at the Lateran while the priests backed the choice of one of their own, Boniface (418–22).[88] This was a schism that cut right through the ranks of the clergy and divided the city, but it clearly reflected deep unhappiness with Zosimus and a determination to wrest control back into traditional hands. Leo, given his involvement with Sixtus, was presumably a member of Boniface's party. The final choice of

---

[83] Augustine, *Ep* 22*, *CSEL* 88, 116–17, dated March 420.
[84] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 149–50.   [85] PL 20.680.
[86] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 111–35.
[87] R.W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, DC, 1989), 48–60.
[88] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 359–64.

Boniface was made by an imperial decree at the start of April 419. In some ways, Rome took years to recover from Zosimus and Leo had some hard lessons to learn at an early stage in his career. In the broader perspective, however, Zosimus proved only a temporary setback in the papacy's long march away from the far more violent and damaging disputed election of 366 and the emergence of Boniface represented the triumph of the Roman old guard.

Boniface at once confirmed the alignment with Augustine that Zosimus had imperilled in 418.[89] Boniface did Augustine the courtesy of consulting his opinion by sending him a letter that Julian of Eclanum had written to Rome and another written by a group of Pelagian bishops to Rufus of Thessalonica.[90] It is highly significant that Alypius was in Rome and carried these letters back to Augustine. In response, Augustine dedicated his *Contra Duas Epistulas Pelagianorum* to Boniface[91] in about 420, and sent it back by the hand of Alypius. Augustine took this opportunity to offer a review of Rome's position on the substance of Pelagian ideas under both Innocent and Zosimus and acquitted the Apostolic See of any suggestion of unorthodoxy.[92]

With regard to Gaul, at first Boniface still relied on Patroclus of Arles to contain the Bishop of Valence,[93] but eventually realised that it had been foolish to invest such power in him and took steps to restore the metropolitan rights of Marseilles, Vienne, and Narbonne.[94] He showed considerable vigour in defending papal rights over Illyricum against local challenges and an attempt by the Emperor Theodosius II to transfer supervision of Illyricum to Constantinople.[95] He lobbied the Emperor Honorius in Ravenna to intervene on his behalf[96] and dealt directly with Rufus of Thessalonica[97] to stiffen his resolve and the bishops of Corinth[98] and Thessaly[99] to challenge their lack of obedience.

The restoration of unity after the disputed election and of international confidence in the papacy after the blunders of Zosimus would

---

[89] Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 241–4. [90] I.3 *CSEL* 60, 424–5.
[91] I.1 *CSEL* 60, 423. [92] II.5–8 *CSEL* 60, 463–8.
[93] Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 60–4. [94] Ibid. 69–71.
[95] Jalland, *Life and Times of St Leo the Great*, 196–200. [96] *Ep* 7, PL 20.765–7.
[97] *Ep* 13, PL 20.774–7. [98] Now lost but referred to in Ep 13.
[99] *Ep* 14, PL 20, 777–9.

take time; by 440, Leo could confidently act as though that process was now complete. But more strikingly, the pontificate of Zosimus and the emergence of Boniface revealed the importance of a further papal alignment: with Augustine. Augustine had been accepted as a touchstone of orthodoxy and his endorsement was vital for Boniface. Leo, as a very junior figure, had been drawn into a powerful group of Roman clerics who established that alignment. It is hardly surprising that Leo was to become Augustine's most significant but also discriminating disciple. It was probably the inadequacies of Rome's theological response to the Christological controversy of 428–33 that opened his eyes to the need to develop his own theological ideas and it was to Augustine more than anyone else that he would turn.

Conclusion

The Roman Church was led by a tightly knit clerical elite which responded quickly to resolve the disputed elections of 366 and 418. As Rome was Christianised, so the popes and clergy had to position themselves in relation to the secular values of the city's political and social elites. They did not offer unambiguous support to the ascetic movement's attempt to segregate Christianity from the world but rather looked to Ambrose of Milan as their guide to how the Christian, and above all the bishop and priest, should behave as the new embodiment of ancient principles. The Pelagian controversy, Leo's first exposure to a major theological debate, forced them to address these issues again, as well as the position of the papacy in the Western Church. In encountering the theological genius of Augustine, Leo had met the greatest influence on his own theological development.

2

The Nestorian Controversy

Introduction

Leo grew up as a minister of the Church of Rome and achieved positions of seniority in the 420s in the last phase of the Pelagian controversy, where he had close relations with leading figures on both sides of the dispute in Gaul. He was archdeacon, second only to the pope, during the Nestorian crisis. Leo's theological education owed everything to these two disputes. In 430, neither he nor anyone in Rome showed the theological competence to intervene effectively in the Nestorian controversy. By 440, he was capable of producing a view of Christology and salvation that answered the needs of his own world and engaged with the theological concerns of the age.

Rome and the Nestorian Controversy, 428–30

Boniface's success in repairing the damage of the 418–19 schism can best be judged by the undisputed election of his successor, Celestine (422–32),[1] despite the fact that Eulalius was still alive. Celestine had been Boniface's archdeacon and so it is no surprise that he continued his policy of reducing the power of Arles in southern Gaul[2] and showed the same resolve in insisting that the bishops of eastern Illyricum acknowledge Rufus of Thessalonica as his vicar.[3] In North Africa, however, he showed himself to be much less sure-footed,

---

[1] Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums*, 381–416.
[2] Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 74, 98–100.
[3] Celestine, *Ep* 3, PL 50.427–9; Jalland, *Life and Times of St Leo the Great*, 200–1.

repeating Zosimus' mistake of supporting the reinstatement of the priest Apiarius. A council in Carthage in about 426 demonstrated that Apiarius was in fact a scoundrel, unworthy of papal support, and in the process once again Rome seemed not only to be interfering but to lack judgment,[4] but by the late 420s the Vandal invasion silenced the repercussions of Rome's miscalculations over Apiarius. Celestine did, however, show a surprising interest in Britain and Ireland, sending Germanus of Auxerre to root out Pelagianism in 429[5] and in 431 sending Palladius to Ireland as its first bishop.[6] After the death of Augustine, he was careful, however, not to accede to Prosper of Aquitaine's request for an endorsement of the late Bishop of Hippo's teaching on predestination.[7]

When Nestorius became Bishop of Constantinople in 428, Leo was a senior figure in the curia of Pope Celestine in Rome, either already or soon to be the archdeacon of Rome. Presumably, he endorsed and perhaps even shaped the judgments and actions of the Apostolic See throughout the Nestorian controversy. From an early stage, Rome's relations with the new Bishop of Constantinople were frosty. Nestorius' early letters to Celestine,[8] probably written in the summer of 428, asked for information about the condemnation of Julian of Eclanum and the other Pelagian bishops who had sought sanctuary in Constantinople: this must have looked at best like an aggressive attempt by Constantinople to act as a court of appeal against the decisions of Rome, perhaps at worst like a sign of Pelagian sympathies in Nestorius. Rome made no reply for two years, but conducted some investigation into Nestorius' theology of original sin.[9] As Rome

---

[4] Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church*, 188–99.

[5] Prosper, *Chronicon*, sa 429: T. Mommsen, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctorum Antiquissorum, Chronica Minora*, vol 1 (Berlin, 1892), 472.

[6] Prosper, *Chron*, sa 431 (Mommsen, 473); I. Wood, 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels,' in M. Lapidge and D. Dumville (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), 1–25; T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo the Great: Mission and Primatial Authority,' in D. Dumville (ed.), *Saint Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge, 1993), 1–12.

[7] Celestine, *Ep* 21, PL 50.528–30; Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 244–9.

[8] *ACO* I.2, 12–15.

[9] Celestine indicated in his first contact with Nestorius two years later that he had not been found to hold unorthodox views on original sin: *ACO* I.2, 11. Whether they had simply scrutinised Nestorius' writings available to them or had made enquiries through contacts in Constantinople is unknown—the idea that Rome used Marius

looked at Nestorius with suspicion and probably anger from an early stage, they were ready to discount the fears he also expressed in these letters about Apollinarianism and Arianism in the Eastern capital—perhaps on reflection they might have regretted that twenty years later.

Rome certainly heard all about the crisis over Nestorius' Christology long before the summer of 429. Nestorius had already circulated a dossier of his sermons by then as an act of self-justification: Rome received a copy and (according to Cyril) they could not believe what they found, getting in touch with Cyril to check their authenticity.[10] Furthermore, probably towards the end of 429 or the beginning of 430 at the latest, Leo commissioned from John Cassian a polemical assault on the theology of Nestorius, the *De Incarnatione*, which he readily branded heretical. As Cassian wrote to Leo in his preface, 'you demand and order us to fight with feeble hands against the recent heresy and new enemy of the faith.'[11] Cassian completed the work by the summer of 430,[12] but it was not until then that Pope Celestine convened a synod in Rome and condemned Nestorius. So months before the official Roman judgment, Leo was already confident that the Bishop of Constantinople was a heretic and had commissioned a vigorous refutation of his errors. How was he so sure?

The key is a glimpse we have into a hidden world of contacts between Celestine and Cyril,[13] when Cyril mentions in passing in his first letter to Nestorius that Celestine had consulted him about the authenticity of Nestorius' sermons. There is no record of this in the Roman archive but perhaps we have Cyril's reply. Cyril sent his deacon, Posidonius, with a letter from Cyril that reported Bishop Dorotheus preaching in Nestorius' presence against the Theotokos,

Mercator as a spy can be disounted: Trevor Jalland stated the old view in *The Church and the Papacy: A Historical Study* (London, 1944), 295–6; it was successfully exploded by É. Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23 (1949), 5–37, 207–44; 24 (1950), 28–52, 235–65 at (1949), 6–17.

[10] Cyril, *Ep* 2.2–3, *ACO* I.1.1, 24.   [11] Praef 3, *CSEL* 17, 236.

[12] He refers to Nestorius throughout as Bishop of Constantinople, albeit a heretic: e.g. 6.10 (*CSEL* 17, 337), 6.11 (ibid. 339), 6.18 (ibid. 344–5); he also writes when Augustine is still alive, 7.27 (ibid. 385)—he died on 28 August 430.

[13] S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria and the Nestorian Controversy: The Making of a Saint and of a Heretic* (Oxford, 2004), 103–11 lays great stress on the influence of Cyril on the Roman interpretation and condemnation of Nestorius.

an event clearly early in Nestorius' episcopate and at the beginning of the controversy.[14] He also brought a selection of texts of Nestorius together with a private memorandum, a particularly damning commentary by Cyril on the texts.[15] When did Posidonius make this visit? He was in Rome in August 430 when Celestine held his synod and condemned Nestorius. He conveyed the letters that Celestine wrote then to the Eastern bishops announcing the condemnation. Most accounts believe that this was the occasion when he brought the private memorandum and even attempted to suggest that it was then forwarded to Cassian and influenced the writing of the *De Incarnatione*.[16] This makes no sense. Cassian could not have been commissioned to write the book in the summer of 430. Equally, the letter from Cyril that Posidonius brought does not fit the summer of 430: its account of the sermon of Dorotheus would hardly be news then.

It is far more plausible to suggest that Posidonius visited Rome in the summer of 429, probably at about the time Cyril wrote his first letter to Nestorius. This visit was probably a response to Celestine's query about the authenticity of Nestorius' sermons. He brought a further selection of Nestorius' sermons and a damning commentary on them. At that point, Celestine and Leo decided that Nestorius would have to be condemned, commissioned Cassian to provide an expert critique, and sent Posidonius back to Cyril offering their tacit approval. Cyril, confident of Rome's support, then composed his second letter to Nestorius which is dated to the end of January or February 430.[17] In the spring, Cyril embarked on a diplomatic offensive on the imperial court and a variety of bishops,[18] after which he sent Posidonius back to Rome in the summer, where Celestine then convened his synod and gave his verdict in August 430. With this long-standing collusion between them, Celestine readily commissioned Cyril to prosecute his judgment but had to offer Nestorius

---

[14] Cyril, *Ep* 11, *ACO* I.1.5, 10–12 (Greek), PL 50.447–54 (Latin).

[15] *ACO* I.1.7, 171–2 (Greek); PL 50.453–8 (Latin).

[16] E.g. Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome' (1949), 225; N. Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London and New York, 2000), 38.

[17] This is the date given by the Acts of Chalcedon cf. *ACO* II.1, 104.

[18] Cf. Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome,' (1950), 209; L.R. Wickham, *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford, 1983), pp. xxi–xxii.

the entirely incredible excuse that they had not been in touch with him for two years as they had taken so long to translate his sermons into Latin.[19]

This reconstruction of the events leading to the composition of the *De Incarnatione* and the papal condemnation of Nestorius, therefore, puts great weight on the secret memorandum that Posidonius delivered in Rome, in my view in the summer of 429. It presents a picture of Nestorius that must have shocked the papal court.[20]

The faith or rather the perverse opinion of Nestorius is as follows. He says that God the Word, since he foreknew that he who was born of the holy Virgin would be holy and great, for that reason chose him and caused that he would be born of the Virgin without a man and bestowed on him this grace, that he would be called by the same names as himself, and finally he raised him from the dead. On account of which, when it is said that the Only-Begotten Word of God is incarnate, he is said thus to be incarnate because he was always with that holy man who was born of the Virgin. He said that he was with this man in the same way that he was with the prophets, with a greater conjunction. For this reason, he avoids in all circumstances speaking of a union but calls it a conjunction, of the kind by which things are connected extrinsically and of which God said to Joshua, 'As I was with Moses, so shall I be with you.' (Josh, 1.5). To hide the impiety, he says that the Word was with him from the womb.[21]

Could Cyril, in the summer of 429, have seriously suggested that Nestorius was effectively denying the divinity of Christ? His much neglected first letter to Nestorius[22] in fact makes just such an

[19] Celestine, *Ep* 13.3, *ACO* I.2, 7—in fact their ability to read them in Greek can be seen in their having questioned Cyril about their authenticity.

[20] Celestine refers to the impact of Posidonius' mission in his letter to the people of Constantinople in August 430, *Ep* 14.2, *ACO* I.2, 15, and refers to Posidonius also in *Ep*, 13.3, *ACO* I.2, 7.

[21] *Inter Epp Coelestini*, IX PL 50.453–5: *Nestorii fides seu potius perversa sententia sic se habet. Ait Deum Verbum, cum enim qui ex sancta Virgine natus est, sanctum et magnum futurum praescisset, ipsum idcirco elegisse, ac fecisse ut sine viro nasceretur ex Virgine, hancque ei contulisse gratiam, ut suis ipsius nominibus appellaretur, eum denique a mortuis suscitasse. Quocirca cum Unigenitum Dei Verbum incarnatum dicitur, ideo dicitur incarnatum, quia cum homine illo sancto qui de Virgine natus est semper fuit. Quemadmodum autem cum prophetis, sic, inquit, fuit cum isto secundum majorem conjunctionem. Quare ubique fugit dicere unitionem, sed conjunctionem vocat, qualis est ea qua connectitur qui extrinsecus est, et de qua Deus dicit ad Josue: Sicut fui cum Moyse, ita ero tecum (Jos 1.5). Ut autem tegat impietatem, Verbum cum ipso ex utero dicit fuisse.*

[22] *ACO* I.1, 23–5.

accusation, that the papers of Nestorius in circulation give the impression that Christ is not God but an instrument of the deity, a God-bearing man. That letter was prompted by Nestorius' angry reaction to Cyril's letter to the monks[23] which had criticised the idea that Christ was only a man used by God as an instrument.[24] He made the same allegation in his Festal Letter 17.[25] The secret memorandum entrusted to Posidonius is a starker statement of what was suggested in these letters. A year later, in his third letter to Nestorius, Cyril did not repeat this accusation, having defined Nestorius' heresy more narrowly as a failure to define how the divine Word was united with the man, effectively believing in two identities in Christ. Therefore it seems certain that the secret memorandum and the mission of Posidonius can be dated to the summer of 429 and that it reflects an early stage of Cyril's understanding of Nestorius. It persuaded Rome and, though Cyril refined his view of Nestorius over the coming months, Rome held this opinion for over twenty years.[26]

Cassian's Failed Critique of Nestorius: The *De Incarnatione*

Listening to Posidonius would certainly have persuaded Leo that Nestorius was a heretic who must be opposed. If he then forwarded the memorandum to Cassian when he commissioned him to write a refutation of Nestorius, it would explain Cassian's damning and inaccurate account of Nestorius. His critique is strikingly in line with Cyril's opinions of 429. Cyril had already implied that Nestorius' ideas amounted to reducing Christ to a *psilos anthropos* (simply a man) in his letter to the monks of Constantinople and the first and second letters to Nestorius.[27] Cassian, probably having read Cyril's second letter to Nestorius as well as Posidonius' memorandum, accuses Nestorius

      [23] Ibid. 10–23.   [24] Ibid. 22, lines 25–6.   [25] PG 77. 785A.
      [26] H.J. Vogt, 'Papst Cölestin und Nestorius' in G. Schwaiger (ed.), *Konzil und Papst: Historische Beiträge zur Frage der höchsten Gewalt in der Kirche. Festgabe für Hermann Tüchle* (München, 1975), 85–101, argues that Celestine could not have derived his view that Nestorius was an adoptionist from the Nestorian texts available to him but owed it entirely to Posidonius and Cassian.
      [27] Cyril, *Ep* 1.11, 20, 26, *ACO* I.1.1, 10–23; *Ep* 2, *ACO*, I.1.1, 23–5; *Ep* 4.4, *ACO* I.1.1, 25–8.

at least twenty times of believing that Christ was a *solitarius homo* (only a man) despite an abundance of evidence available to him in Nestorius' own writings to the contrary,[28] and almost as often accuses him of separating the humanity from the Son of God.[29] The suggestion in Posidonius' memorandum that the adoption of the Son of Mary was on the basis of his foreseen merits could also explain Cassian's interest in exploring links between adoptionism and Pelagianism in Nestorius.

As Cassian built up his case that Nestorius regarded Christ as a mere man, adopted on account of his foreseen merits, and therefore also a Pelagian, he turned for corroborative support to Leporius' *Libellus emendationis*, written about 418.[30] Leporius was a monk in Gaul who had made a pre-Nestorian attempt to safeguard the transcendence of the divine majesty by a systematic refusal to attribute anything of the human condition to the Divine Word in the incarnation. The *Libellus*, written under the influence of Augustine, was his retraction.[31] Leporius depicts himself as erring in ignorant good faith until challenged by his bishops in Gaul and finally persuaded of the true way of speaking of Christ and the meaning of the incarnation by Augustine.

Although we did not deny then also Christ the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary, as you yourselves remember, yet paying very little attention to the mystery of faith we used to call him not God born man but perfect man born with God, being afraid of course lest we should ascribe the human condition to the divine. O foolish wisdom![32]

---

[28] Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome' (1949), 238–9; see also M.-A. Vannier, *Jean Cassien: Traité de l'Incarnation contre Nestorius* (Paris, 1999), 63–66.

[29] Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome,' (1949), 239–40.

[30] Reinhold Weijenborg's claim in 'Leo der Grosse und Nestorius,' *Augustinianum*, 16 (1976), 353–98 that the *Libellus* was written by Leo can be discounted; he even resorts to finding in its title an anagram of Leo and Peter overcoming Satan (p. 372); he is forced to claim that Cassian was the true author of Augustine's *Ep* 219, about Leporius (pp. 377–80).

[31] F. de Beer, 'Une Tessère d'orthodoxie. Le "Libellus emendationis" de Leporius (vv 418–21),' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 10 (1964), 145–85, esp. 151–8.

[32] *Lib* 2: *Tametsi Christum Filium Dei, tunc etiam, natum de sancta Maria non negaremus, sicut et ipsi recordamini, sed minime attendentes ad mysterium fidei non ipsum Deum hominem natum sed perfectum cum Deo natum hominem dicebamus, pertimescentes scilicet ne divinitati conditionem assignaremus humanam. O stulta sapientia! CC* 64, 113.

Cassian read Leporius to be advocating a stark kind of adoptionism. He described it as emerging in recent times in the greatest city of the Belgae, a new form of old heresies for which he cannot find a name (because, of course, Leporius had recanted, which makes him an excellent example for Nestorius[33]).

Putting forward this blasphemy that Our Lord Jesus Christ was born a mere man [*solitarius homo*], it affirms that the fact he came later to divine honour and the divine power resulted from his human merit and not from the divine nature which he would possess. Thus he has not always had the divinity itself by virtue of the divinity united to him but he merited it afterwards as a reward for his labours and his passion.[34]

Cassian said that this heresy is *germana et consanguinea*, sister sharing the same blood, with that of Nestorius who also believes in the *homo adsumptus*, the assumed man.[35] This presentation of Leporius is, of course, a travesty, perhaps rather a puzzling one.[36] Leporius nowhere admits that he had been an adoptionist.[37] How can Cassian infer it? The most likely source is Leporius' discussion of the sufferings of Christ and especially the crucifixion, where he acknowledges that to safeguard the divinity from any participation in the suffering he ascribed the endurance of the torment to the patience of the perfect man. Leporius stresses repeatedly that he believed the perfect man endured the passion without any divine help: *in nullo quasi perfectus homo a diuinitatis auxilio iuuaretur*. This was accomplished by the possibility that lay within mortal nature, without divine help: *solum per se hominem egisse haec omnia possibilitate naturae mortalis, sine*

---

[33]   *De Inc* 1.4–5, *CSEL* 17, 241–2.

[34]   *De Inc* 1.2.5: *solitarium quippe hominem dominum nostrum Iesum Christum natum esse blasphemans hoc, quod ad dei postea honorem potestatemque peruenerit, humani meriti, non diuinae asseruit fuisse naturae, ac per hoc eum deitatem ipsam non ex proprietate unitae sibi diuinitatis semper habuisse, sed postea pro praemio laboris passionisque meruisse*, *CSEL* 17, 239.

[35]   Ibid.

[36]   So, for instance, Amann has to appeal to Cassian's inadequacy as a theologian to account for his finding adoptionism in Leporius: *art cit* (1949), 229–30.

[37]   Leporius is so far from suspecting any accusations of adoptionism against him that he can use the term *assumptus homo* with entirely orthodox intent: *Ac sic ut ipse Deus Verbum totum suscipiens, quod est hominis, homo sit et assumptus homo totum accipiendo, quod est Dei, aliud quam Deus esse non possit* ('As God the Word, taking up everything which is of man, is a man; so the man assumed, by receiving everything which is of God, could not be anything other than God') *Libellus* 3, *CC* 64, 114.

aliquo deitatis adiutorio. The cry of dereliction, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' was thus taken by Leporius to mean that the perfect patience of the man was proved in such great distress with very little divine help: *quod perfecta hominis patientia, minime adiuuante deitate, in tantis doloribus probaretur.* This *perfectus homo* acts *per se solus homo*; he believed him to have acted *solum per se hominem.*[38]

When Leporius conceded that he had held that the perfect man had perfect patience from within the resources of his mortal nature and was tested and proved by suffering with the smallest help from God, he also used the term *solus homo*. He does not appear to have wanted to convey the sense that Christ was merely a man but rather that he acted as a man without divine intervention. He had so divided the divine and human to protect the divine that he depicted the manhood acting alone, independently of the divinity. In his retraction, he conceded that this does lead to two Christs and in a sense the conversion of the Trinity into a quaternity.[39] But Cassian takes *solus homo* to mean *solitarius homo*—the 'man alone' is 'only a man.' Leporius' talk of the *perfectus homo* also gave Cassian the evidence he needed to claim that a systematic insistence on the distinction of the divine and human in Christ, for the sake of safeguarding the divinity, led inevitably to a belief in independent human perfectibility[40] and that that in turn led inevitably to a version of adoptionism in which the perfect man was associated with the Divine Word as a reward for his foreseen merits. This too was an accusation levelled against Nestorius in Posidonius' memorandum.[41] It is here that Cassian sees the link between the perfect man in Christ acting independently of divine aid, which he has identified as adoptionism,

[38] *Libellus*, 9, *CC* 64, 120.   [39] *Libellus*, 3, *CC* 64, 113.
[40] The *Libellus* makes no explicit reference to Pelagius and does not expand on the implications for the rest of humanity of Christ the perfect man enduring the Passion with the *possibilitate naturae mortalis*, but that some inference could be drawn about the working of grace is apparent; this is a point missed by J. Plagnieux, 'Le Grief de complicité entre erreurs nestorienne et pelagienne d'Augustin à Cassien par Prosper d'Aquitaine?' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 2 (1956), 391–402, see esp. 392.
[41] *Cum enim qui ex sancta Virgine natus est, sanctum et magnum futurum praescisset, ipsum idcirco elegisse, ac fecisse ut sine viro nasceretur ex Virgine, hancque ei contulisse gratiam, ut suis ipsius nominibus appellaretur, eum denique a mortuis suscitasse*, PL 50.453.

and Pelagianism. This looks like an even less discriminating attempt to weave different heresies together into one web.[42] But from personal knowledge, Cassian accuses Leporius of having been a Pelagian and claims he admonished Leporius himself when he was still in Gaul.[43] Cassian might have known more of what Leporius meant by Christ's accomplishing his Passion *possibilitate naturae mortalis*. It is possible that Leporius was influenced by Pelagius without making any reference to him in the *Libellus*. It is certainly noteworthy that Leporius was sent to North Africa to discuss his views with Augustine at about the same time the Bishop of Hippo was leading the condemnation of Pelagianism; without some such connection, such a long and expensive journey would seem a rather extravagant endeavour for an obscure monk with Christological views that could have been corrected within Gaul, whether by Cassian himself or the theological teachers at Lerins who educated men of the calibre of Eucherius of Lyons, Hilary of Arles, Salvian, or Vincent of Lerins.

The chapter where Cassian discusses the links and parallels between Nestorianism and Pelagianism[44] is not one of his most lucid. He appears to say that Nestorius' heresy issues from Pelagianism. He then goes on to spell out the parallel between a doctrine of the *solitarius homo* in Christ living a sinless life and reaching the Kingdom of Heaven and the idea of perfectible human nature achieving the same merit.[45] He appears to be arguing here that the Pelagian doctrine of man was drawn from the earlier heresy of the *solitarius homo*. This reduces Christ's saving work to merely setting an example, abolishing the grace of divine redemption.[46] He is thus talking about three distinct groups, the earlier heretics who saw in Christ a *solitarius homo*, the Pelagians, and the new heresy of Nestorius, which form a line of descent. He then attributes strict adoptionism to one of these groups—it is not clear which, but presumably the earlier

[42]   L. Wickham, 'Pelagianism in the East,' in R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1989), 200–13, recognises that temporal coincidence and the support shown by Nestorius for the Pelagian exiles add weight to the presupposition that if a sharp distinction is made between the natures, Christ offers perfectible man only an example of perfection to strive for, but fails to see the attempt to establish a real link in Cassian (see pp. 210–11).
[43]   *De Inc* 1.4.2, *CSEL* 17, 241.   [44]   Ibid. 1.3, *CSEL* 17, 239–40.   [45]   Ibid.
[46]   Ibid. 1.3.2, *CSEL* 17, 240.

heretics—who say that the Lord became Christ at the baptism and God at the Resurrection.[47]

At this point, he returns to the link between Nestorius and Pelagius and here makes the point that a doctrine of *solitarius homo* would lead one to infer that it must depend upon or lead to a doctrine of perfectible human nature being able to attain salvation without divine redemption.[48] He then points to the fact that Nestorius has sheltered the Pelagians and suggests that therefore Nestorius must know that their teaching is the same as his own.[49]

As Cassian explores the accusation that Nestorius believes in a Christ who was *solitarius homo*, he repeatedly adds the accusation that this makes him a Pelagian. In teaching that Christ was *solitarius homo*, he is trying to fan flame into the ashes of Pelagianism;[50] it was in fact Pelagian belief that Christ was *solitarius homo*;[51] thus he vomits forth the poison and hisses the spirit of Pelagius and surpasses him in saying that Christ is only like a statue of the Emperor;[52] that in saying Christ was an image that received God, Nestorius has made him no different in nature from the saints;[53] consequently there is no real difference between Christ and the saints, who are all sons by adoption, the very heresy of Pelagius.[54] The metaphor of Christ as the temple indwelt by the Divine Word is also dismissed as adoptionist, showing that Nestorius is a thorny offshoot of the Pelagian heresy.[55] A full-scale attack on the doctrine of *solitarius homo* as deriving from Pelagius and leading to two Christs gives Cassian the opportunity to say that Pelagius was an adoptionist, believing the man became Christ at the baptism, whereas Nestorius goes even further and says he became the Temple at the Baptism and is not really God even after the Ascension.[56]

These wild accusations against Nestorius and also against the Pelagians demand an explanation beyond the emotional exuberance and theological limitations of John Cassian. Cassian found the heresies he expected to find in Nestorius; that probably led him to turn back to Pelagius and find the heresies he expected to find there. Effectively, his

---

[47] Ibid. 1.3.3, *CSEL* 17, 240.
[48] Ibid.   [49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid. 5.1.2, *CSEL* 17, 302.
[51] Ibid. 5.2.1, *CSEL* 17, 303.
[52] Ibid. 5.2.2, *CSEL* 17, 303–4.
[53] Ibid. 5.3, *CSEL* 17, 304.
[54] Ibid. 5.4.4, *CSEL* 17, 306.
[55] Ibid. 7.21.4, *CSEL* 17, 379.
[56] Ibid. 6.14, *CSEL* 17, 341–2.

argument went like this: according to Posidonius, Nestorius believes
Christ to be a mere man, adopted by God for his foreseen merits,
and he was known to be sympathetic to condemned Pelagians; on
his own admission, Leporius used to believe that Christ was a man
acting alone, independently of divine grace, in the saving events,
and from Cassian's own personal knowledge Leporius had been a
Pelagian. Therefore, Leporius was, like Nestorius, an adoptionist who
held Christ to be not only 'solus homo' but 'solitarius homo,' while
Nestorius was, like Leporius, a Pelagian. From this trick of legerde-
main, he seems to have concluded that Nestorianism provided the
logical underpinning for Pelagianism and that Pelagianism was the
chronological parent of Nestorianism.

This, however, was a deduction that the late phase of the Pelagian
dispute predisposed him to make. It is exactly the point made by
Prosper of Aquitaine a year or two later in his *Epitaphium Nestori-
anae et Pelagianae*,[57] where he argued that Nestorianism is both the
mother and daughter of Pelagianism, second in time but first in the
theological order. It is likely[58] that both Cassian and Prosper were
already exploring the Christological and soteriological implications
of Pelagianism by the late 420s under the influence of Augustine. In
De Praedestinatione Sanctorum 15,[59] written in 428 or 429, Augustine
reached the climax of his argument in support of divine predesti-
nation where God freely gives grace to some and not to others. He
pointed out that there could be no greater grace than for a human
being to be assumed into a unity of person with the Son of God,
but that this was done without any question of preceding merit. The
Incarnation has nothing to do with merit but is the supreme instance
of grace. The grace of Christ is the grace of the Head which extends to
all his members. If Christ was predestined, then so are his members.

This passage is not unique in Augustine's writings.[60] Nevertheless,
given its date, it could very easily have been a decisive influence
on both Cassian and Prosper, leading them to expect to find a link

---

[57] PL 51.153–4.
[58] A point argued by Plagnieux, 'Le Grief de complicité . . . ,' 392–3.
[59] PL 44.981–3.
[60] Plagnieux points to *De Correptione et Gratia* 30, *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remis-
sione* 2.17 and 1.31, *De Trinitate* 13.17 and the *Enchiridion* 40 and 36: 'Le Grief de
complicité . . . ,' 392, 396–7.

between a Christology of *solitarius homo* distinct from the Divine Word, a soteriology of *perfectus homo* who does not need divine help, and a doctrine of the perfectibility of man who does not need divine grace. Effectively they had anticipated Bishop Gore's dictum: 'The Nestorian Christ is the fitting saviour of the Pelagian man.'[61]

It must have been very tempting for Leo, on receiving the *De Incarnatione* that he had commissioned, to accept this conflation of Nestorius with Pelagianism. It is striking, however, that Rome did not. They had clearly conducted their own investigation into Nestorius' Pelagian sympathies and examined his teaching on original sin where they found him orthodox.[62] Leo had probably intended Cassian's book to be a major Western contribution to this Eastern debate and was presumably disappointed. It gained no official recognition in Rome and was consigned to the library shelves. That is an interesting sign of independent theological judgment in Rome, perhaps in Leo himself, in 430. After all, though they might have been ignorant of the issues raised in the dispute between Cyril and Nestorius, they had learned a great deal about Pelagianism over the previous dozen years. But Cassian's failure underlined Leo's ignorance of Christology. This disappointing book, with its affectionate and respectful dedication, probably launched Leo into a close study of Christology. The one central idea that he probably took away from it was the danger of dividing Christ between divine and human so that the human was a separate agent. For him, this is what the Nestorian controversy was all about and in Cyril he saw the greatest champion of the unity of Christ.

The Roman Condemnation of Nestorius

The Roman Synod called by Celestine in August 430 was therefore probably long in preparation. Celestine's speech[63] defended the title Theotokos and ruled out any doctrine of two sons in Christ, which was clearly regarded as the underlying heresy of Nestorius. On 11

---

[61] In 'Our Lord's Human Example', *Church Quarterly Review*, 16 (1883), 98, quoted by Wickham, 'Pelagianism in the East,' 210.

[62] *Ep* 13.16, *ACO* I.2, 11.

[63] It survives in Arnobius Junior's *Conflictus Arnobii et Serapionis*, PL 53.289–90.

August, he dispatched a parcel of letters by the hand of Posidonius to Nestorius, to Cyril, to John of Antioch, Juvenal of Jerusalem, Flavian of Philippi, and Rufus of Thessalonica, and to the clergy and people of Constantinople, announcing the condemnation of Nestorius. Posidonius reached Constantinople on 30 November 430, having picked up from Alexandria on the way Cyril's third letter to Nestorius and its 12 anathemas.

Celestine was surprisingly vague in these letters about the nature of Nestorius' heresy. This could again be accounted for by the influence upon him of Cyril's private memorandum; he was certainly content to delegate the prosecution of Nestorius to Cyril and in that letter simply says that Nestorius must confess the birth of Christ as God;[64] he evidently felt that Cyril has a masterly and orthodox appraisal of Nestorius that needed no amplification from him. Celestine summed up the key doctrine in dispute as the birth of Christ as God,[65] he alluded to Paul of Samosata as a warning to Nestorius,[66] and he accused him both of removing from the creed the words that promise salvation[67] and of trying to separate what scripture has united.[68] The message is clear if not fully articulated: Nestorius has been judged guilty of a heresy resembling that of Paul of Samosata, dividing the divine and human in Christ, preaching a doctrine of two Sons and thereby undermining the hope of salvation. This picture agrees with the private memorandum of Posidonius, but does it owe nothing to John Cassian?

We can detect an echo of Cassian in Celestine's letter to the people of Constantinople, where he claims that Nestorius 'divides the human and divine natures in our Christ, describing him at one point as man alone [*solus homo*], and at another ascribing to him the society of God, whenever he deems it becoming.'[69] The distinction made

[64] Celestine, *Ep* 11.7, *ACO* I.2, 6.
[65] To Cyril, *Ep* 11.7, *ACO* I.2, 6; to John of Antioch and the other bishops, *Ep* 12.3, 4, 5, *ACO* I.2, 21–2; to the people of Constantinople, *Ep* 14.1, *ACO* I.2, 15.
[66] *Ep* 13.15, *ACO* I.2, 11; *Ep* 14.8, *ACO* I.2, 17.   [67] *Ep* 13.8, *ACO* I.2, 9.
[68] *Ep* 13.18, *ACO* I.2, 12.
[69] *Ep* 14.2, *ACO* I.2, 15: *humanam enim in Christo nostro discutit divinamque naturam, nunc solum hominem, nunc ei societatem dei, quotiens tamen dignatur adsignans.* D. Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford, 2003), 217–18 has claimed that there are fundamental agreements between Celestine, Cassian, and Cyril in their critiques of Nestorius.

here between *solus homo* and 'man associated with God' reflects the contrast that Cassian found in Leporius between man acting independently of divine aid, the *per se solus homo*, and man associated with God as a reward for his merits, the *homo perfectus*. They might well be referring to the emphasis in Nestorius, for instance in the sermon against the Theotokos which was probably part of the dossier of sermons they had already studied, on the humanity of Christ as an independent agent. Though Celestine refused to endorse Cassian's attempt to tie together Pelagius, Leporius and Nestorius in one nexus, saying explicitly that however suspicious he found Nestorius' sympathy for the Pelagian bishops, he has not found him guilty of error over original sin,[70] he followed him in condemning Nestorius as an adoptionist who effectively denied Christ's divinity.

Celestine, and with him Leo, withheld their full approval from Cassian's critique of Nestorius but they did not doubt the authority of Cyril, whose condemnation of Nestorius they sanctioned wholeheartedly. During these three years, the papacy strove to assert its authority as a yardstick of orthodoxy but there was throughout a gulf between the loftiness of their dogmatic judgments and the poverty of their theological understanding. The flood of papers that crossed Celestine's and Sixtus' desks in the late stage of the crisis amounted to a stiff course in Christology. It is not unreasonable to see Leo as this controversy's most intelligent student.

The Formula of Reunion, 433

Rome's involvement in the Nestorian crisis suggests that neither Pope Celestine nor his advisors had any idea of how deeply Cyril was suspected not only by Nestorius but also more widely by the bishops of Syria. Celestine sent his delegates to Ephesus to endorse the deposition of Nestorius; there is no sign that he anticipated a corresponding condemnation of Cyril.[71] This must have been at least in part because Rome had almost certainly not received a number of vital texts that would have affected their understanding of the dispute. If the Codex

---

[70] *Ep* 13.16, *ACO* I.2, 11.
[71] For the fullest recent account of the Council of Ephesus, see S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 138–80.

Palatina, a dossier of documents translated and sent to Rome in 433 or soon after, was a collection of texts not yet seen in Rome, it would appear that they had only received Cyril's second and third letters to Nestorius. The only major work of Cyril's available in Latin translation before 433 was the *Scholia de Incarnatione*. It is possible that a Latin translation of the work was sent to Rome in the autumn of 432 or early in 433,[72] perhaps as part of a campaign by Cyril to impress the new pope, Sixtus, with his orthodoxy.[73]

Cyril regularly used two descriptions of the incarnation; one, a katagogic account, which presents the Logos becoming flesh; the other, an anagogic account, which describes Christ as a union of two natures. Perhaps they are two distinct models;[74] perhaps they are complementary descriptions of the same model.[75] The former asserts that Christ's identity is the Logos; the latter can give fuller weight to the reality of his human nature. Cyril readily throws the two together, as in the second letter to Nestorius,[76] and betrays no sense of tension between them.[77] He preferred the first version for it fitted his soteriological interests, but he resorted to the anagogic account when he wanted to assert Christ's full humanity and safeguard the divinity

---

[72] M. Richard, 'Le pape saint Léon le Grand et les *Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti* de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie,' *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 40 (1952), 116–28; Richard claims that the translation was commissioned by Cyril but since it appears in the *Collectio Palatina* along with the other translations of Marius Mercator his case is inconclusive.

[73] Ibid. 127–8.

[74] R.A. Norris, 'Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,' *Studia Patristica*, 13 (1975), 255–68 describes the second model as composite; Fairburn, *Grace and Christology*, 21–3 distinguishes between a composite union, the result of two distinct subjects being joined, and a synthetic one, where one subject takes on a second nature and yet remains the sole identity; all the evidence points towards Cyril having a 'synthetic' model.

[75] T.G. Weinandy, 'Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation,' in T.G. Weinandy and D.A. Keating (eds.), *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London, 2003), 40 denies that there is any real distinction between the two models.

[76] *Ep* 4.3, *ACO* I.1.1, 26–7.

[77] *Scholia* 4: *descendisse autem dicimus e caelo filium hominis per unitatem dispensatoriam, uerbo tribuente propriae carni gloriae suae et diuinae maiestatis claritudinem*, *ACO* I.5, 186; ibid. 11: *nam sicut corpus alterius est praeter animam, unus tamen ex utroque homo efficitur et uocatur, ita etiam ex perfecta dei uerbi substantia et ex humanitare* [sic] *perfecta unus est Christus, idem in eodem deus simul et homo*, *ACO* I.5, 189; ibid. 25: *sed quod carnem accipiens ex muliere et ei ex utero adunatus, exiit homo, idem simul et dues*, *ACO* I.5, 202.

from being the subject of human attributes and actions.[78] Though his more characteristic explanation of how the Logos suffers is to ascribe it to the Logos acting in the flesh,[79] Cyril can indulge in paradox when ascribing suffering to the Logos using the first account[80] while just a page earlier making a distinction between two modes of action using the second account.[81]

The *Scholia de Incarnatione* is unusual in the weight it gives to the anagogic account. It opens by referring to the union, the *adunatio*, by the titles Christ, Emmanuel, or Jesus.[82] A good deal of space is devoted to explaining the *adunatio*.[83] It is compared at length to the relationship of soul and body[84] and contrasted with a conjunction, in which man was made God,[85] and this contrast leads into a discussion of the divinity of the Logos incarnate, which is contrasted with God indwelling a man.[86] This is summed up with a repetition that Christ and Emmanuel is neither a God-bearing man nor a God-indwelt man.[87] The review at the end of the treatise on the suffering of Christ oscillates between the two explanations of the Logos suffering in the flesh and the Logos united to suffering flesh. Celestine and Leo would not have been helped by the fact that the translation makes no distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia*, translating both as *substantia*.[88] The Latin translation also carefully inserted a phrase about the *diversitas naturarum* not found in the Greek.[89] It is significant that Leo was later to quote this passage in the florilegia he attached to his Tome in 449 and to *Ep* 165 in 458. The overall impression of the

---

[78] A point that would have clarified the discussion of Christ's suffering in P. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford, 2004), 154–6.

[79] J.A. McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria: The Christological Controversy. Its History, Theology and Texts* (Leiden, 1994), 191: 'suffering, death, sorrow, and suchlike, are inapplicable to "God-in-himself," but no longer inapplicable to God-made-man.'

[80] E.g. *Scholia* 34: *patiebatur autem inpassibiliter, ACO* I.5, 213.

[81] E.g. *Scholia* 33: *patitur et non patitur secundum aliud et aliud: patitur quidem humane carne, eo quod homo sit; inpassibilis autem diuine manet ut dues, ACO* I.5, 211.

[82] Ibid. 1–3, *ACO* I.5, 184–6.   [83] *Scholia* 8–12, *ACO* I.5, 188–93.

[84] Ibid. 8, *ACO* I.5, 188–9.   [85] Ibid. 12, *ACO* I.5, 191–3.

[86] Ibid. 13–6, *ACO* I.5, 193–7.   [87] Ibid. 17–8, *ACO* I.5, 197–8.

[88] Ibid. 8: *ex perfecta dei uerbi substantia et ex humanitare* [sic], *ACO* I.5, 189; ibid. 11: *quod autem naturae siue substantiae inconfusae manserunt, hinc scribimus, ACO* I.5, 190.

[89] Ibid. 121–2 (he does not supply the reference: *Scholia* 25, *ACO* I.5, 203).

work, reinforced in the Latin translation, is thus that Christ can best be understood as an *adunatio* of two realities.

The point of convergence of the two accounts for Cyril, which obscured the distinction between them, was the *kath'hypostasin* formula. It appears precisely at the point where the two descriptions are in play in the second letter to Nestorius.[90] If this is taken to mean that the union of the natures occurs by and at the level of the person of the Logos,[91] then the agent of incarnation in the first account is the same as the principle of the union in the second. The vital point in both accounts, as far as Cyril was concerned, was that they both expressed the oneness of Christ, whether the single subject was defined as the Logos acting in the flesh or as the *henosis* of the divinity and humanity.

The Codex Palatina,[92] collected and translated by Marius Mercator in 433 or shortly afterwards, made some very important texts available to Pope Sixtus, who succeeded Celestine in the summer of 432, and his archdeacon, Leo. It included Nestorius' letter to Celestine of November 430, written before he received Celestine's verdict against him,[93] the two sermons preached by Nestorius in December 430 as a response to Celestine's letter,[94] Nestorius' second letter to Cyril[95] and the Twelve Anathemas.[96] But the dossier did not necessarily clarify the Roman understanding of Cyril's thought. The translation obscured Cyril's distinctive formulae, especially his use of *hypostasis*. It did not convey the sense of identity or agent which Cyril was probably striving towards in his use of *hypostasis*, which might have been rendered by *persona*, but rather the idea of reality or existence. In Cyril's second letter to Nestorius, Marius twice translated *kath'hypostasin* with the formula *substantialiter uel essentialiter*[97] and on its third appearance

---

[90] *Ep* 4.3, *ACO* I.1.1, 26–7.

[91] Pace Wickham, who translates the phrase 'substantially,' *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford, 1983), 4 n. 6, it can plausibly be argued that the term should be rendered 'according to the person' or 'personally,' cf. Weinandy, '*Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation*,' 41–3; McGuckin, *St Cyril of Alexandria*, 212–16; M. Richard, 'L'introduction du mot "Hypostase" dans la théologie de l'Incarnation,' *Mélanges de science religieuse*, 2 (1945), 5–32, 243–70, esp. 245–52.

[92] *ACO* I.5, 3–215, cf. B. Nisters, 'Die Collectio Palatina,' *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 113 (1932), 119–37; Amann, 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome' (1950), 51–2 argues that it would have revealed to Rome how complex the issues were.

[93] *ACO* I.5, 182.   [94] Ibid. 39–46.   [95] Ibid. 46–9.
[96] Ibid. 182–3.   [97] Ibid. 50.

the expression was translated by the adjective *substantialem*. [98] When the phrase appeared in the first of the 12 Anathemas it was translated *secundum substitentiam*. [99] In the third anathema, *hypostaseis* was rendered *substantias*; in the fourth anathema, the pairing of *hypostaseis* with *prosopa* was translated as *personis duabus uel substitentiis*. [100] Thus if Cyril intended the *kath'hypostasin* formula to stress that the true identity and agent of incarnation in Christ is the *hypostasis* of the Logos, that meaning was entirely lost in Marius Mercator's Latin. Instead, his translation suggested to his readers that Cyril was claiming that the union was at the level of reality or existence—one reality as opposed to the view attributed to Nestorius that Christ was a conjunction of two distinct existences united by grace. Sixtus and Leo could read these texts to mean that Christ is one reality, a *substitentia*, whereas Cyril's point was probably rather to assert that the true identity of the Christ was the divine Word.

Thus not only had the Roman court, under the influence of Cyril, formed a distorted view of Nestorius in 428–30, they also had a very limited understanding of Cyril which was reinforced by the arrival of fresh documents in 433. This would have obscured the extent to which the dispute of 428–31 revolved around the question of the two natures of Christ. Furthermore, it is likely that they had little appreciation of Syrian worries about Cyril. Given that they might not even have seen the Twelve Anathemas until the Codex Palatina arrived, they were probably largely unaware of the intense pressure that had been brought to bear upon Cyril in the winter of 432–3 to temper them. [101]

In 431–2, Celestine took the view that the sole issue of dispute was the condemnation of Nestorius, advocated by Cyril and rejected by John of Antioch. This was after all the principal act of Ephesus; Cyril's Council, approved by Rome, produced no dogmatic formula. As Celestine believed that the condemnation of Nestorius was the sole prerequisite for reunion, he wanted to isolate Nestorius; to achieve that he continued to define his heresy in the most extreme terms. He sent out four letters on 15 March 432, all of which pleaded for

[98] Ibid. 51.   [99] Ibid. 182.   [100] Ibid. 183.
[101] Richard, 'Le pape saint Léon le Grand et les *Scholia*,' 124–5; Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 255–67.

an irenic spirit but all of which sought to detach Nestorius from any following. He wanted Nestorius removed from the scene. He regretted that Nestorius had been allowed to retire to Antioch[102]—obviously not out of vindictiveness against the fallen bishop but because his presence there could perpetuate the schism between Antioch and Alexandria. He counselled Nestorius' successor, Maximian, to distinguish between a heresiarch and his followers in the same way as the followers of Caelestius had been treated differently from their leader[103]—this reference to the Pelagians being perhaps more than a casual parallel. To the clergy and people of Constantinople, he spoke of the removal of Nestorius as a surgical operation, like cutting out gangrene.[104] He wanted to emphasise that Nestorius stood convicted of denying the divinity of Christ, so he reported to the Emperor Theodosius II that the election of Nestorius' successor had been announced in Rome on Christmas Day, *ad eum diem quo celebramus Christi Dei nostri natalem secundum carnem*;[105] to the clergy and people of Constantinople, he asserted again that Nestorius had denied the divinity of Christ.[106] Celestine threw all his energy into the isolation of Nestorius presumably because he saw his condemnation as the sole issue of dispute.

Shortly after Celestine's death in 432, Sixtus III dedicated the great basilica of St Mary Major with a triumphal arch decorated with scenes celebrating the Virgin Mother—an enormous papal project which indicated Rome's view of the nativity of Christ.[107] Sixtus' policy was now focused on achieving reunion with John of Antioch. His first

---

[102] *Ep* 22.8, *ACO* I.2, 98–101.   [103] *Ep* 24.3, *ACO* I.2, 90–1.
[104] *Ep* 25.9, *ACO* I.2, 91–8.   [105] *Ep* 23.4, *ACO* I.2, 88–90.
[106] *Ep* 25.10–1, *ACO* I.2, 95: *Sit ergo illius nostrae mortis auctoris perdito honoris et gloriae vestimento secutus exemplum; merito hoc cum primo homine Adam fecerit qui deitatem Adae nouissimi sic negauit.*
[107] S. Spain, ' "The Promised Blessing": the Iconography of the Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore,' *The Art Bulletin*, 64 (1979), 518–40 shows the coherence of the whole scheme, relating the two walls depicting the covenants of faith and law with the triumphal arch as their fulfilment in Christ; she shows how Leo's Christmas sermon of 443 (*tr* 24.1) fits the design perfectly. Her arguments are ignored by J.D. Sieger, 'Visual Metaphor as Theology: Leo the Great's Sermons on the Incarnation and the Arch Mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore,' *Gesta*, 26 (1987), 83–91; M. Miles, 'Santa Maria Maggiore's Fifth-Century Mosaics: Triumphal Christianity and the Jews,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 86 (1993), 155–75 preposterously argues that the mosaics are anti-Jewish because they appropriate Old Testament imagery to Christian use.

letter was to Cyril. While it encouraged him to stand firm by the definitions of the Council and to bear attacks upon him with a calm mind, it also urged that the highest priority was now to draw in John of Antioch.[108] His second letter was also to Cyril. This was couched in language that suggested that all the concessions would have to be made by Antioch. Sixtus said that John of Antioch and the others with him who wish to become followers of Nestorius—a disparaging expression that must have been intended to assuage Cyril's feelings— and all who want to institute churches beyond ecclesiastical discipline (presumably a reference to the abrogation of the right of the bishops of Antioch to conduct ordinations in Cyprus) must reject all that was rejected by the Council.[109] This sounds like a cannier version of Celestine's policy, deliberately confining the problem to the deposition of Nestorius as a way of calming heated feelings on both sides. Despite the critical tone Sixtus adopts here towards John of Antioch, he is in fact insisting to Cyril that the concession that John must make is very limited—effectively, the condemnation of Nestorius.

A settlement was successfully negotiated early the following year. John wrote to Sixtus, Cyril and Maximian to announce that he accepted the deposition of Nestorius and that he condemned his blasphemous doctrines.[110] This was exactly what Sixtus had wanted. What he failed to realise was the depth of concern in Syria that Cyril's teaching was unorthodox. Antioch needed to be satisfied that Cyril was not contaminated by Arianism and Apollinarianism. Cyril's acceptance of the Formula of Reunion[111] shortly afterwards was thus also a condition for reconciliation. It is likely that in 433 no one in Rome saw the theological significance of the document.[112] Read in the light of the *Scholia* and the documents translated in the Codex Palatina, it must have seemed an unremarkable statement of Cyril's thought. It is unlikely that they had any idea of Cyril's embarrassment about the Formula of Reunion and his repeated attempts to explain it away to his most ardent followers.[113] Rome's settled view of Cyril— one that in various ways he had cultivated himself—was that he was

---

[108] Sixtus, *Ep* 1.5–6, PL 50.583–8.   [109] *Ep* 2.3, PL 50.587–90.

[110] *Inter epp Sixt*, 3.2, PL 50.591–4.   [111] *ACO* I.1.4, 17–19.

[112] John of Antioch included it in his letter to Sixtus: *ACO* I.1.7, 158–60.

[113] G. Gould, 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion,' *Downside Review*, 106 (1988), 235–52; S. Wessel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, 268–78, though she overstates the

the vigilant defender of simple truth, the divinity of Christ, who was perfectly happy to talk of the two natures of Christ. Thus the Formula of Reunion was not read in Rome as a concession squeezed out of a reluctant Cyril but as a summation of shared faith, the basis for all future exposition of Christological doctrine.

Thus, while the realisation was dawning in Rome, and no doubt especially on Archdeacon Leo, that they needed to deepen their understanding of the Christological issues raised by the Nestorian crisis, they saw no need to doubt that the most profound exponent of orthodoxy was Cyril and that in the Formula of Reunion they found a convenient summary of his thought. There[114] they found a Cyril who readily agreed that the union of two natures in Christ was unconfused, that Christ was complete God and complete man, born of the Father and born of Mary, co-essential with the Father and co-essential with humanity, whose actions could be divided by theologians into those that were common to one person and those that were appropriate to the divinity and those appropriate to the humanity. These statements made any allegation that Cyril was a crypto-Arian or Apollinarian quite absurd. Cyril could not be accused of Apollinarianism if he acknowledged two unconfused natures in Christ, with a human nature co-essential with the rest of mankind. Equally, Cyril could not be accused of suggesting that the Logos suffers in the Incarnation as the actions of Christ can legitimately be divided between the two natures. The repeated stress of the Formula is on the duality of natures in Christ, while the references to double consubstantiality and unconfused union and the use of the title Theotokos for the Virgin all established that there was one indivisible Christ.

The principal achievement of 433, as far as Sixtus was concerned, was the ratification of the deposition of Nestorius. In the autumn, he wrote to Cyril rejoicing that no one was lost except Nestorius and making the interesting observation that John of Antioch had never separated from Rome or been deceived by the blasphemies of Nestorius' preaching—he had merely suspended his sentence, not

---

concession that Cyril makes over the division of acts in Christ, 271–2—the Formula of Reunion does not contradict his fourth anathema.

[114] *ACO* I.1.7, 70; cf. the version signed by Cyril, *ACO* I.1.4, 17.

refused it.[115] In his letter to John, he remarked that no one could question the condemnation of Nestorius and repeated the accusation that Nestorius had preached a Christ who was only a man.[116] The whole dispute was still presented as a fight to defend the divinity of Christ.

The Impact of Ambrose and Augustine: *Una Persona*

Rome was probably as little bothered about clarifying the distinction between the person of the divine Word and the person of Christ as Cyril. The fluidity of the language used in papal letters[117] and Cassian's *De Incarnatione*,[118] especially using the title Christ to refer to the Saviour's humanity, shows little awareness of the problem in the early 430s. Like Cyril, they found either way of talking a satisfactory expression of the oneness of Christ. But of Cyril's two models, Cyril preferred the first and Rome preferred something closer to the second. From the time of Tertullian, Latin theology had given due weight to the distinction of the two natures of Christ. As in so many ways, Ambrose was probably the single most formative influence on all Roman Christological thinking by 430. It is probably no accident that it was his Christmas hymn *Veni, Redemptor Gentium* that was quoted as the first authority in Celestine's speech to the Roman synod that condemned Nestorius on St Lawrence's day 430.[119] Ambrose's two great anti-Arian works, the *De Fide* and *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento*, were probably very well known in Rome. Both sought to defend the divine Word from accusations of weakness or ignorance by ascribing the suffering and weakness of Christ to his human nature, and therefore both works devoted a good deal of space to distinguishing the natures and to asserting the fullness of Christ's

[115] *Ep* 5, *ACO* I.2, 107–8.

[116] *Ep* 6, *ACO* I.2, 109: *hominem namque natum eum tantummodo praedicabat, auferens incarnationis mysterium et illud evacuans, immo illud impugnans, quo secundum symbolum fides et salus nostra subsistit.*

[117] E.g. Celestine, *Ep* 14.1: *humanam enim in Christo nostro discutit divinamque naturam, nunc solem hominem, nunc ei societatem Dei, quoties tamen dignatur adsignans*, *ACO* I.2, 15, where Christ (*ei*) is the humanity or man in the subordinate clause but the union of the two natures in the main clause.

[118] Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology*, 189–97.   [119] PL 53.289.

humanity. In the *De Fide*, Leo and his contemporaries could have found a thorough review of biblical passages which were distributed between the two natures.[120] Ambrose did not shrink in either work from a full acknowledgement of the sufferings of Christ.[121] In doing so, he recognised the reality of Christ's human will and affections,[122] and identified the soul as the seat of Christ's trouble and pain.[123] In stressing the reality of Christ's humanity, he did not even avoid admitting that as a child Christ was ignorant like any child and had to grow in wisdom.[124] Ambrose took this view of Christ's humanity to show that he suffered no injury in his divine nature,[125] and when he produced paradoxes such as *inmortalis in morte, inpassibilis in passione*[126] they were in fact an assertion of the distinction of the two natures.[127] Using 1 Tim 2.5, he can allocate different saving functions to the two natures, interceding as man and granting as God.[128] Christ therefore took what was proper to us from us and offered it for us and redeemed us from our condition and conferred on us what was not ours from his own divine generosity.[129] The overwhelming thrust of the Christology of both works is towards distinguishing the natures, so much so that he has to defend himself against the charge of dividing Christ.[130] The subject in Christ is always the divine Word but the account of the union is left unexplored apart from one influential image, of the giant in two substances.[131] Here we have the union described as a distinct subject; firmly rejecting any suggestion that

---

[120] *De Fide* 2.4–5, 2.8, 3.2, 5.11, *CSEL*, 78, 68–72, 77–82, 110–2, 265–9.

[121] *De Fide* 2.11, *CSEL* 78, 89–93; *De Inc* 6. 46–8, *CSEL* 79, 247–8.

[122] *De Fide* 2.7, *CSEL* 78, 74–6.

[123] *De Inc* 5.41, 7.63–78, *CSEL* 79, 244, 256–64.

[124] Ibid. 7.72–4, *CSEL* 79, 261–2.   [125] Ibid. 5.42–5, *CSEL* 79, 245–7.

[126] Ibid. 5.39, *CSEL* 79, 242.   [127] Ibid. 5.36–7, *CSEL* 79, 241–2.

[128] *De Fide* 3.2, *Quasi altissimus donat, quasi homo precatur: aliud creatoris, aliud redemptoris est. Distincta licet, unius tamen auctoris beneficia sunt*, *CSEL* 78, 111.

[129] *De Inc* 6.54, *Ergo ex nobis accepit, quod proprium offerat pro nobis, ut nos redimeret ex nostro, et quod nostrum non erat, ex suo nobis divina sua largitate conferret*, *CSEL* 79, 251.

[130] Ibid. 7.75–7, *CSEL* 79, 262–4.

[131] Ibid. 5.35, *Quem* [Christ] *quasi gigantem sanctus David propheta describit, eo quod biformis geminaeque naturae unus sit, consors divinitatis et corporis, qui 'tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo exultavit tamquam gigans ad currendam viam'* (Ps 18.6) *sponsus animae secundum verbum, gigans terrae, quia usus nostri officia percurrens, cum deus semper esset aeternus, incarnationis sacramenta suscepit, non divisus, sed unus, quia utrumque unus et unus in utroque, hoc est vel divinitate vel corpore. Non*

the natures act separately, it is Christ who is the *unus* who is not one thing from the Father and another thing from the Virgin, but from the Father in one way and from the Virgin in another.

The *Scholia* and the Latin of the translations affected Rome's reading of Cyril, but only to make him conform to what they expected to find. By the time the Formula of Reunion reached Rome, it is highly likely that Leo had already closely studied the *Libellus* of Leporius, used so extensively by Cassian in his *De Incarnatione*. It was probably his introduction to the Christology of Augustine. There he would have found first the statement that it was the *persona* of the Word who became incarnate *solum proprie personaliter* not with the Father or Holy Spirit *naturaliter*.[132] The distinction between the divine nature of the Trinity and the three divine persons is then echoed in the distinction between the person and natures of the Word incarnate: but here *persona* refers to the union of the natures in the incarnation.[133] The union is not a mixture and the natures remain distinct,[134] for they operate on different levels of reality, the one active and the other potent.[135] Yet since the identity of Christ is the divine Word, he can be said to have hungered and thirsted, been weary, flogged, crucified, died, and rose again[136] for God was crucified *secundum carnem*.[137] Thus, Leporius is clear that the identity of Christ is the divine Word who has personally become incarnate, but that the *persona* of Christ is the union of divine and human natures in the incarnate Word. Cyril would have had no objection to Leporius' account but, apart from the use of *prosopon* in the Formula of Reunion, he would not have wanted to describe the union of the natures as a *persona*. It was not surprising, however, that it was the similarities between Cyril and Leporius that caught Leo's eye, similarities underlined by the Formula of Reunion.

enim alter ex patre et alter ex virgine, sed idem aliter ex patre, aliter ex virgine, CSEL 79, 240–1.

[132] *CC* 64, 115.

[133] *CC* 64, 117: *Ideoque una persona accipienda est carnis et Verbi ut fideliter sine aliqua dubitatione credamus unum eundemque Dei Filium insaperabilem semper geminae substantiae etiam gigantem nominatum, in diebus carnis suae et uere semper gessisse omnia quae sunt hominis, et uere semper possedisse quae Dei sunt.*

[134] Ibid. 115: *commixtio partis utriusque corruptio est.*

[135] Ibid. 115: *Deus enim qui capax est, non capabilis, penetrans non penetrabilis, implens non implebilis.*

[136] Ibid. 117.   [137] Ibid. 118.

This use of the word *persona* was perhaps the vital contribution that Leporius made to Leo's understanding of the Incarnation. Apart from the concession made in the Reunion Formula, Cyril had no such word, though he does appear to have been not unwilling to entertain the concept. Cassian also fails to see the value of the word. He was very strong, in his opposition to Nestorius, on the unity of Christ and that it was the divine Word who had become incarnate.[138] He denounced Nestorius' idea of a conjunction of natures in Christ[139] and accused him of teaching two Christs.[140] He repeatedly urged that the same one was God the Word before his birth and God in a body after the birth,[141] the same one in heaven as on earth, in humility, or in glory.[142] The Word, while remaining what he was, added humanity to himself.[143] The double birth of God, eternally from the Father and on earth from his mother, underlined that the true actor in the Incarnation is the divine Word.[144] He often used the communication of idioms as a way of demonstrating that there was one subject in Christ.[145] But Cassian did not follow Leporius in his description of Christ as one *persona* with two natures; like Cyril, he had no word for the union of the divine and human. He resorted to traditional but, as a response to Nestorius, inadequate expressions such as *homo unitus Deo*[146] or *homo susceptus*[147] when reviewing the scriptural titles of Christ which, he showed, brought out his two natures. There is a puzzling passage where Cassian, insisting that there is no division between Christ and God, remarked that the *substantia* of God and Christ are indivisible and so too the *persona*;[148] this might mean that the unity of God and man in Christ should be recognised as one *persona*, though that is not the point he is making at this stage; in another place, he attacked any tendency to divide Christ so as to

---

[138] Fairburn, *Grace and Christology*, 179–88.   [139] *De Inc* 7.8, *CSEL* 17, 364.

[140] Ibid. 6.15, *CSEL* 17, 342.   [141] Ibid. 4.1, *CSEL* 17, 286.

[142] Ibid. 2.7, *CSEL* 17, 260.

[143] Ibid. 2.2, *CSEL* 17, 248, 5.15, *CSEL* 324, 6.19, *CSEL* 345.

[144] Ibid. 7.14, *CSEL* 17, 370.

[145] Ibid. 3.8, *CSEL* 17, 271–2, 3.10, *CSEL* 17, 273–6, 5.7, *CSEL* 17, 310–13, 6.20, *CSEL* 17, 346–7, 7.4, *CSEL* 17, 357–9.

[146] Ibid. 2.3, 3, *CSEL* 17, 250.   [147] Ibid. 2.3, 4, *CSEL* 17, 251.

[148] Ibid. 3.7: *intellege ergo indubitanter Christum deum, et ubi uides inseperabilem Christi ac dei esse substantiam, inseperabilem quoque agnosce esse personam*, *CSEL* 17, 270.

make him have two *personae*, where the word clearly means identity or agent.[149] *Persona* also means identity when Cassian says that the Lord revealed it to Paul on the road to Damascus.[150] Otherwise the word is almost entirely absent from his account of Christology, which shows that he had learned nothing from Leporius and had used him simply to establish a link between Nestorius and Pelagius.

Leporius' understanding of *una persona Christi* was strikingly Augustinian.[151] Augustine had been content with casual language to describe the unity of God and man in Christ until about 411, when he produced the formula *una persona* and *utraque natura* in *Ep* 137 to Volusianus.[152] His term for the duality is often *substantia*, occasionally *natura*. He distinguishes between *Verbum* and *homo* but never speaks of *divinitas* and *humanitas*. The union, however, is always *una persona*.[153] This was to be a key concept for Leo.[154] Leo took the terminology of *persona* to describe the union directly from Augustine and his various uses of it—*suscipere in unitatem personae*; *fieri una persona*; *una persona. . . utraque substantia*; *una persona . . . gemina substantia*—can all be documented in Augustine.[155] The simple striking fact is that, whereas Cyril had to resort to phrases such as his unfortunate *mia physis* formula to describe the incarnate Logos, Leo follows Augustine in using a single term for the union of God and Man in Christ. That indicates both a readiness firmer in Leo than in Cyril to distinguish the Logos in his naked divinity from the Logos incarnate and also a willingness to acknowledge the significance of the duality of the natures in Christ.

What kind of union is this *unitas personae*? When he first introduced the term in the Letter to Volusianus (*Ep*, 137), he spoke quite merrily of the *persona Christi* as a *mixtura* of God and man, and likened it to the person of a man which is a *mixtura* of body and soul.[156] His aim at that point was to prove that the incorporeal

---

[149] Ibid. 5.7, *CSEL* 17, 313.   [150] Ibid. 3.6, *CSEL* 17, 267.

[151] H. Drobner, *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus: zur Herkunft der Formel 'Una Persona'* (Leiden, 1986), 265–9.

[152] Ibid. 169–71; *Ep* 137.9 *mediator apparuit, et in unitate personae copulans utramque naturam, CSEL* 44, 108.

[153] Drobner, *Person-Exegese und Christologie*, 249–51.

[154] B. Studer, 'Una Persona in Christo: Ein augustinisches Thema bei Leo dem Grossen,' *Augustinianum*, 25 (1985), 453–87.

[155] Ibid. 475–6, 483–7.   [156] *Ep* 137.11, *CSEL* 44, 110.

and corporeal can be joined to form one reality but often likened the
unity of the person of Christ to the union of the soul and body or to
a marriage.[157] The soul was itself the intermediary of union between
two alien elements, God and man: the divine Word could unite with
the soul because both were spiritual, and the soul could unite with the
body.[158] Nevertheless, it would not be accurate to say that Augustine
always has a compositional model of the incarnation. He was proba-
bly not as alert to the dangers of using compositional imagery as he
might have been,[159] but the language he used to describe the incar-
nation was careful. His overwhelmingly most common terminology
made the divine Word the agent of the incarnation, using verbs such
as *suscipere*, *accipere*, *assumere*.[160] From the very beginning of his new
use of *persona* he regularly ascribed the union to the action of the
divine Word taking a human nature.[161] The union was personal in
the sense that the incarnation was the action of the divine Word and
the principle of unity was the divine Word.[162] Thus the identity of
Christ is the Word. Augustine's strong sense of the personal unity
of Christ was expressed in his deployment of the communication of
idioms.[163]

On the other hand, he often described the union as one of grace.
At the height of the Pelagian controversy, in 417, he sketched out
a theory of universal divine presence which can be contrasted with
God's indwelling the minds and wills of the elect by grace.[164] The
incarnation is unique but it too is effected by grace. When Augus-
tine deployed the free and gracious election of the Son of Man in
the incarnation as an argument against the Pelagians, did he think
of the incarnation as a gracious indwelling similar to the view of
Theodore of Mopsuestia in his *De Incarnatione*?[165] What seems most
likely is that Augustine did not regard 'substantial' or 'graceful' as

---

[157] Studer, 'Una Persona,' 481–2.

[158] T. van Bavel, *Recherches sur la Christologie de saint Augustin: l'humain et le divin
dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin* (Fribourg, 1954), 30–2.

[159] Ibid. 30–2, 34–7.   [160] Ibid. 42–3.   [161] E.g. *Ep* 137.9, *CSEL* 44, 108.

[162] Van Bavel, *Recherches sur la Christologie*, 13–30.   [163] Ibid. 57–73.

[164] *Ep* 187, *CSEL* 57, 81–119.

[165] J. McWilliam Dewart, 'The Influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia on Augustine's
Letter 187,' *Augustinian Studies*, 10 (1979), 113–32 argues not only that he had a
view of 'grace-presence' rather than 'substantial presence' but that Augustine owed
his thinking to Theodore.

mutually exclusive categories,[166] but the last decade of the Pelagian controversy probably taught him to be more careful in his thinking about the union of divine and human in Christ as a union of grace.[167]

Leo began his study of Christology at the point Augustine left it. He had not only grasped the concept of the anagogic personal union of the natures in Christ by 440, he had even adopted the word *persona* to describe it. In doing so, he had clearly gone beyond Cassian. From Cassian's account of Nestorius, he saw the dangers of making any comparison between the incarnation and the election of the saints or any suggestion that the union of divine and human in Christ is a moral one. At the same time, the Nestorian controversy sharpened Leo's wariness of compositional language. Therefore, the impact of the Pelagian controversy on the way the issues in the Nestorian crisis had been understood made Leo clearer that the union of the natures in Christ would have to be defined in personal and not composite terms, that the divine Word assumed a human nature and remained the identity of the union of the natures in Christ. It probably also affected the way he read Cyril, making him all the more inclined to find in his writings a description of Christ as a substantial entity which fitted Augustine's terminology of *persona*. Leo's Christological thinking by 440 probably owed a great deal to his understanding of Cyril but it is likely that it was Leporius, discussed but underused by Cassian, who introduced Leo to the use of the term *persona*: it is striking that Leporius was cited in Leo's florilegium of 458[168] which probably reproduced an earlier florilegium appended to the Tome to Flavian.

The obverse of the emphasis on *unitas personae*, of course, is the recognition of the duality of the natures. The Formula of Reunion expressed it in terms of double consubstantiality. This was also to be a major theme for Leo.[169] Though he could have found it in Cassian's *De Incarnatione*,[170] it was only Eutyches' explicit rejection of it that led Leo to use it in the crisis that led to and followed Chalcedon.

[166] J. McGuckin, 'Did Augustine's Christology depend on Theodore of Mopsuestia?' *Heythrop Journal*, 31 (1990), 39–52.

[167] Van Bavel, *Recherches sur la Christologie*, 37–41. [168] *Ep* 165.6.

[169] B. Studer, '*Consubstantialis Patri Consubstantialis Matri*: Une antithèse christologique chez Léon le Grand,' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 18 (1972), 87–115.

[170] 6.13, *CSEL* 17, 340.

The subject of any double consubstantial formula is the Christ, the union of the two natures. Before the crisis provoked by Eutyches, Leo was more inclined to talk of the two births of Christ, again an idea found in the Formula and in Cassian.[171] In this expression, the Word is the subject of both births, born eternally from the Father and in time the agent in the incarnation born of Mary. In some ways it was a happier formula for expressing the identity of Christ as the Word rather than as a composite, but it carried less soteriological significance. Leo's later use of the formula against Eutyches was motivated partly by his direct repudiation of the Reunion Formula and by the belief that Eutyches' error was to assert a single nature, the divine nature, in Christ. Leo followed Augustine again in his understanding of 'consubstantial,'[172] allowing it to mean both equality and unity. The double consubstantiality formulas clearly point towards the first use, as a way of asserting that Christ is fully God and fully man.[173] It is true that Leo does not conceive of the divine unity as being the same as the peace restored by Christ.[174] But the formula must also be a way of expressing Christ's double solidarity with the Father and Holy Spirit and with humanity as mediator between God and Man. Though he only adopted the formula once it had been challenged and become a matter of controversy, it expressed well his own emphasis on duality and unity in Christ.

It is fair to conclude that the Formula of Reunion was read in Rome as a successful statement of the shared faith of Cyril and his critics. It was seen as a statement aimed against Nestorius rather than the price Cyril had to pay for peace. For Leo himself, its arrival coincided with the start of his own career as a student of Christology. Rome saw Cyril as the greatest exponent of orthodoxy and therefore the Formula of Reunion provided Leo with a key to grasping his central ideas. In other words, the Cyril whom Leo respected was the Cyril of the Reunion Formula; difficult texts, such as the Twelve Anathemas, were read in the light of the Formula. As Leo read the Formula, he could find many of its points in Cassian. And in Cassian, he also found the *Libellus* of Leporius, a way into reading his great master, Augustine.

[171] *De Inc* 7.14, *CSEL* 17, 370.
[172] B. Studer, 'Il concetto di "consostanziale" in Leone Magno,' *Augustinianum*, 13 (1973), 599–607.
[173] Ibid. 603–6.   [174] Studer, '*Consubstantialis Patri*,' 93.

Soteriology and the Nestorian Controversy

Cyril in his letter to the Monks and in his first letter to Nestorius, Cassian in the *De Incarnatione*, and Celestine and Sixtus in their condemnations of Nestorius, all accused the Bishop of Constantinople of denying the divinity of Christ. However much Cyril had affected their outlook, the popes and Cassian said that they had found evidence in Nestorius' writings that substantiated the accusation. The evidence was probably his soteriology.[175] For instance, in his first sermon against the title *Theotokos*,[176] he depicted Christ as the perfect man triumphing over Satan, reversing the sin of Adam by obedience, resisting temptation in the wilderness. In all of this, it was plainly essential to Nestorius' view of salvation as the overthrowing of the power of Satan that Christ's victory be as a man: the debt came from a woman and the absolution from a woman.[177] He put a remarkable speech into the mouth of our human nature in Christ pleading with God that he had suffered unjustly and so humanity should now be forgiven as Satan had exceeded his rights.[178] The Saviour is the perfect man, the sinless human nature, enduring the punishment of fallen humanity. It was this that led Cassian to see a parallel with Leporius and therefore with Pelagius—it was plain that if Christ's sinless humanity triumphed because of the aid of the Logos, then the contest was not a true reversal of Adam's fall. The humanity had to endure unaided. In that case, what was the point of Christ being God? Combined with his overriding desire to safeguard the transcendence of the Logos, Nestorius' soteriology led Cyril and Cassian to believe that his account of two agents in Christ pointed towards a denial of Christ's divinity.

By contrast, Cyril had a soteriology of divine kenosis and human glorification. The Logos emptied himself and united flesh with himself, in some sense sharing in human suffering,[179] to glorify the flesh by the power of the Spirit and in turn pass on glory to believers by bestowing upon them the Spirit who incorporated them into

---

[175] Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology*, 59–62.

[176] Sermon 9: F. Loofs (ed.), *Nestoriana: Die Fragmenta des Nestorius: Gesammelt, untersucht und herausgegeben* (Halle, 1905), 249–64.

[177] *Ex muliere debitum, ex muliere absolutio*, Ibid. 256.   [178] Ibid. 256–7.

[179] Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God*, 151–71.

Christ, especially in Baptism and in the Eucharist.[180] For him, unlike
Nestorius, the Incarnation was not a profound paradox but rather the
natural expression of divine love and humility. For him, the Incar-
nation did not imperil divine transcendence but rather manifested
divine love. It was vital for the Logos to be the identity of Christ
and therefore the primary and fundamental agent in Christ, because
the Logos bestowed divine life upon the flesh of Christ and then
bestowed divine life upon believers. The flesh was the recipient of
glory and so it was the Logos that was active, the flesh passive and the
instrument by which glory is mediated to believers.[181] That did not
mean that Christ's life was unimportant. Where Cyril differed from
Apollinaris was not simply in his affirmation that Christ had a soul
but in his view of when and how Christ's humanity was glorified.
For Apollinarius, the mere fact of the Logos taking flesh meant that
that flesh was different from ordinary human nature and was already
glorious. Cyril, by contrast, saw the life of Christ through the lens
of St John's Gospel, with its powerful sense of the bestowal of the
Spirit and the hour of glory climaxing in the death and Resurrection
of Christ.[182]

   Augustine's account of salvation was rooted in a Christology that
stressed the duality of the natures and the unity of the person. His
central concept was mediation.[183] This theme is to be found through-
out Augustine's writings[184] and combined the dual aspects of sote-
riology, reconciliation with God, and transformation of the sinner.
Christ had to be both God and man to accomplish this work of
salvation. Relying on 1 Tim 2.5, Augustine insisted that the mediation

[180] B. Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie: L'Humanité, le salut et la question
monophysite* (Paris, 1997); D.A. Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of
Alexandria* (Oxford, 2004); Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology*, 63–104; N. Russell, *The
Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004), 191–204.

[181] F. Young, 'A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology,' *Journal of Ecclesiasti-
cal History*, 22 (1971), 103–14, esp. 113–14; Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*,
255–85; Keating, *The Appropriation of Divine Life*, 46–52, 89–104.

[182] Meunier, *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie*, 173–8; Keating, *The Appropriation of
Divine Life*, 20–53.

[183] G. Remy, *Le Christ médiateur dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin*, 2 vols (Lille,
1979); B. Daley, 'A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in St Augustine's
Christology,' *Word and Spirit*, 9 (1987), 100–17.

[184] E.g. *Conf* 10.42.67–43.68, *CC* 27, 191–2, *De Civitate Dei* 9.15,17, *CC* 47, 262–3,
265–6, 11.2, *CC* 48, 322, *De Trinitate* 4.7.11–10.13, *CC* 50, 175–9.

was the work of Christ as a man,[185] but that the mediation only brought freedom because he was God.[186] There is therefore a single purification for sinners and the proud, the blood of the just man and the humility of God.[187] As man Christ reconciled sinners with God, as God he overcame and healed their pride.[188] Christ's sinless obedience was an echo of his divine humility. The climax of his obedient life was the crucifixion, in which he was priest and victim.[189] God could have freed humanity from the Devil's power without the reparation of Christ, but Christ's death was an assertion of justice against the injustice of the Devil.[190] In creating a community of love in which true justice could be found, the City of God, Christ the Mediator offered a salvation which had a direct effect on the society alongside it, the earthly city. For Augustine, Christology and soteriology could never be divorced from ecclesiology or, ultimately, politics.[191]

As Leo pondered the aftermath of the Nestorian controversy, Augustine's account was deeply attractive. It gave full weight to Christ's humanity, to his sinless life and death on the Cross. At the same time, the divine Word could be seen as bestowing love and life on reconciled humanity in the incarnate Christ. On this account, the balance of the natures united in one person was the key to salvation. Indeed, it seems to have been reflection on Christ's title as Mediator that gave rise to Augustine's developing the concept of the *persona Christi* in the letter to Volusianus.[192] Christ the Mediator, uniting God and mankind in his own person and mediating God to humanity while representing humanity before God, summed up the Christology of the texts that came before Leo during the crisis, the *Libellus* of Leporius and the Reunion Formula. This was a soteriology

[185] *Conf* 10.43.68, *In quantum enim homo, in tantum mediator, in quantum autem uerbum, non medius, quia aequalis deo et deus apud deum et simul unus deus*, *CC* 27, 192.

[186] *Enchiridion*, 108, *Nam neque per ipsum liberaremur unum mediatorem dei et hominem, hominem Christum Iesum, nisi esset et dues*, *CC*, 46, 107.

[187] *De Trin* 4.2.4, *iniquorum et superborum una mundatio est sanguis iusti et humilitas dei*, *CC* 50, 163–4.

[188] *Enchiridion*, 108, *CC* 46, 107–8.   [189] *De Trin* 4.13.17, *CC* 50, 182–4.

[190] Ibid. 13.12.16, *CC* 50A, 402–4.

[191] R. Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2004).

[192] *Ep* 137.9, *mediator apparuit, et in unitate personae copulans utramque naturam*, *CSEL* 44, 108.

that seemed the best way forward after 433. Furthermore, as a sote-
riology that saw the Mediator as building up solidarity between God
and humanity, it was a profoundly ecclesial account and therefore the
message he wanted to promote in his city.

Leo's Use of his Sources

It is far from easy to detect the works that shaped Leo's thinking.
The modern commonplace that he merely repeated his predecessors
would have seemed to him a compliment. He was firmly of the belief
that the Faith is unchangeable, deriving from the Gospel and the
apostolic preaching and thus ultimately from God.[193] Tradition is the
Rule of Faith, transmitted by the Fathers, the common inheritance of
the Churches which allowed his age to see and touch what the apostles
did.[194] The apostolic Rule of Faith is expressed in the Roman bap-
tismal creed, which he regarded as interchangeable with the Nicene
Symbol.[195] Tradition is also the rule of life: Leo held most usages
to be of apostolic origin and thus could not acknowledge differences
between Rome and Alexandria or Antioch, though he did admit that
some fasts were of more modern institution.[196] Leo, however, pro-
vided no exact definition of the Fathers. He never cited them directly
except in his florilegium of 450.

Leo saw himself as the voice of tradition and for that very reason
avoided quoting authorities: he was his own authority. He frequently
quoted himself, tacitly, as an authoritative source. One important
feature of his theological method is never to reveal his working but to
present his theology as the timeless teaching of the Church. His work
is full of allusion and quasi-citations. Writers are skilfully adapted
but never named. Ideas are appropriated and some key expressions
preserved but they are always absorbed into his own theological

[193] A. Deneffe, 'Tradition und Dogma bei Leo dem Grossen,' *Scholastik*, 9 (1934),
543–54; A. Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et la Tradition,' *Recherches de Science
Religieuse*, 48 (1960), 166–84.
[194] Deneffe, '*Tradition und Dogma . . .*,' 543–8; Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et la
Tradition,' 167–72.
[195] Ibid. 178–83.
[196] Deneffe, 'Tradition und Dogma . . .,' 549; Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et la
Tradition,' 172–7.

understanding. There are some passages where he relied closely on earlier writers—notably Augustine—and even liturgical texts, though whether they are of his own composition or older is impossible to ascertain.[197] He treated scripture in the same way.[198] He cited the bible far less than Ambrose, Jerome, or Augustine.[199] He was more likely to quote a text loosely or allusively than verbatim. The range of texts from which he quoted is very much the same as his contemporaries—the Psalms, Isaiah, Genesis, and Proverbs in the Old Testament; Matthew, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Luke, and 2 Corinthians in the New.[200] In his sermons, about a third of his scriptural references are simple citations, well known to his congregation, either advancing the narrative or concluding a sermon. Nearly a third are proof texts cited to demonstrate a theological point. Just over a third are passages he commented on, frequently expounding scripture by reference to scripture and very seldom by recourse to allegory.[201] But this is done briefly; Leo was not an exegete. Though he showed considerable skill in his occasional forays into typology,[202] Leo was chiefly interested in the direct theological doctrine of the text or in historical narrative. In a rare display of specialised knowledge, he buttressed his literal reading of the text by referring to the law concerning the High Priest's garments which Caiaphas tore.[203]

Since he made no parade of his learning, it is not easy to estimate how well read he was or when he read the theologians who influenced him. He appears not to have known Greek.[204] His florilegium of 450 offers no certain proof that he had read all the works quoted.[205] Clear evidence of his reading can be found in one case at least, however: from the sermons he preached in the spring of 441 and the later

[197] A. Chavasse, 'Dans sa predication, saint Léon le Grand a-t-il utilisé des sources liturgiques?' *Mélanges liturgiques offerts au R.P. Dom Bernard Botte OSB* (Louvain, 1972), 71–4.

[198] A. Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et l'Écriture sainte,' *Studia Patristica*, 6 (1962), 127–40.

[199] Ibid. 127–30.   [200] Ibid. 129–30.   [201] Ibid. 133–8.

[202] E.g. *tr* 55.4 (Wed. of Holy Week, 442); 33.4 (Epiphany, 443); 57.4 (Wed. of Holy Week, 443), 75.1 (Pentecost, 443).

[203] *Tr* 57.2 (Wed. of Holy Week, 443).

[204] M.-B. de Soos, *Le mystère liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand* (Münster, 1958), 7–9.

[205] Ibid. 9–21.

revision of his sermon for 29 July 441, it can be seen that he was then reading Augustine's *Tractatus in Euangelium Ioannis*.[206]

The sources of Leo's theology are overwhelmingly the three great Latin doctors, Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine.[207] In addition to them, there is evidence of Leo's familiarity with north Italian bishops of the generation before his time, the disciples of Ambrose: Philaster and Gaudentius of Brescia and Niceta of Remesiana.[208] These writers informed Leo's thinking but he always adapted them for his own use. He took what he wanted from a source and changed it to suit his own purposes.[209] In one case at least, with a passage from Gaudentius, he gained no apparent advantage by the changes he made, even rendering it verbally less elegant.[210] He made a very interesting adaptation in his discussions of the Jews.[211] These feature in nearly a third of his sermons, especially those on the Epiphany and Passion, and closely resemble those of Augustine. Whereas Augustine talked of the blindness of the Jews in his own day, however, Leo confined his attacks to the contemporaries of Jesus. Where Augustine talked of the double origin of the Church from the Jews and the Gentiles, the shepherds and the Magi, Leo ignored the shepherds and only talked about the derivation from the Magi.

Though these influences are minor, they are very revealing of Leo's attitude to earlier authorities: he absorbed and adapted, rather than simply repeated, them. Much the same will be found with the overarching and central ideas that dominate his thought, above

---

[206] M. Testard, 'La spiritualité pastorale de saint Léon le Grand: À propos d'une correction du pape par lui-même,' in J. C. Fredouille and L. Holtz (eds.), *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes*, vol 1 (Paris, 1992), 239–54.

[207] De Soos, *Le mystère liturgique*, 20; cf. the *Index Fontium* of Chavasse, *CC* 138A, 612–13.

[208] A. Granata, 'Note sulle Fonti di S. Leone Magno,' *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 14 (1960), 263–82; see also C.R. Norcock, 'St Gaudentius of Brescia and the *Tome* of St Leo,' *JTS*, 15 (1914), 593–6.

[209] Y.-M. Duval, 'Quelques emprunts de saint Léon à saint Augustin,' *Mélanges de science religieuse*, 15 (1958), 85–94.

[210] Y.-M. Duval, 'Saint Léon le Grand et saint Gaudence de Brescia,' *JTS* NS, 11 (1960), 82–4, comparing Leo's sermon 56.1 with Gaudentius' tract 12.5.

[211] A. Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et les Juifs,' *Studia Patristica*, 17 pt.1 (1982), 55–61; though Lauras ignores Leo's dismissal of Jewish fasts and penitential processions in his sermon for the September fast 444, *tr* 89.1.

all the great Augustinian ideas of Christ the Mediator[212] and the soteriological structure of *sacramentum* and *exemplum*,[213] which he owed also to Hilary.[214] These central ideas also shaped his reading of scripture. Though he usually eschewed the role of exegete, he did have a hermeneutical theory. There are some passages that he addressed at length, especially in his consideration of the Passion,[215] where a structure can be identified which reveals his sacramental view of scripture. He rehearsed the narrative in a vivid, dramatic style because the text embodies and effects the mystery of Christ. Reading (*lectio*) leads to vision (*visio*) as the reader is subjugated by the text which makes a past event present now. This is faith (*fides*), leading to understanding (*intelligentia*). In turn, this knowledge (*scientia*) deepens the believer's love (*dilectio*).[216] This threefold structure of *lectio-visio*, *fides-intelligentia* and *scientia-dilectio* was drawn ultimately from Hilary of Poitiers but Leo had a sharper, more carefully objective account of the message found in scripture which he owed to Augustine. He also owes to Augustine a richer account of the link between *scientia* and *dilectio*. Leo identified the object of *intelligentia* as *sacramentum* and *exemplum*: the *scientia* of the reader enables the believer to see Christ both as the mystery that transforms life (*sacramentum*) and the pattern that shapes behaviour (*exemplum*) while at the same time it opens the heart in love.[217] The content of his teaching is the *intelligentia* of the Faith, pointing to the *sacramenta* and *exempla* of Christ.

Leo seldom doffed his cap in public to his theological masters, but what is most striking is not so much his dependence on earlier writers as the independent judgement he showed in using them. Much of this reading was done in the years when he was archdeacon, after the Nestorian controversy, when perhaps he already saw his own election to the papal throne as almost a certainty, though plainly the great

[212] Studer, 'Una Persona in Christo.'

[213] B. Studer, 'Sacramentum et Exemplum chez S. Augustin,' *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 10 (1975), 87–141.

[214] T.W. Guzie, 'Exegetical and Sacramental Language in the Sermons of St Leo the Great,' *Studia Patristica*, 12 (1975), 208–13.

[215] B. Studer, 'Die Einflüsse der Exegese Augustins auf die Predigten Leos den Grossen,' *Forma Futuri: Studi in Onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin, 1975), 915–30.

[216] Ibid. 918–23.   [217] Ibid. 924–8.

crisis provoked by the case of Eutyches must have forced him to do
a great deal more work. He was a genuine systematic theologian,
interested in drawing into a coherent pattern ideas that he found
in the books of others and in the process frequently giving them a
sharpness of definition that they had earlier lacked.

Conclusion

When Sixtus III died in the summer of 440, Leo was in Gaul medi-
ating between the *generalissimo* Aetius and the Praetorian Prefect
Albinus. Contemporaries marvelled at the peaceful patience with
which the Roman Church waited forty days for his return to elect
him pope:[218] the disputes of 418–19 were forgotten. The ambitious
preaching programme on which Leo embarked on the day of his elec-
tion was a sign of his theological confidence and his claim to be the
city's teacher. The papacy had found its voice. His decision to preach
owed much to the example of Ambrose. His decision to preach on the
seasons and feasts of the Church's year owed much to the example
of Ambrose's circle of bishops in northern Italy such as Gaudentius
of Brescia and Maximus of Turin but it was also determined by the
way that Christianity had established itself in Rome with relatively
few local churches, relying instead on great occasions in the major
basilicas and the shrines of the martyrs.

The content of the sermons indicates the profound impact of
Augustine on Latin theology and Leo's own efforts to become a the-
ologian worthy of the sophisticated elites of the city.

Augustine's understanding of Christ the Mediator, one person
uniting two natures in himself, was the most important idea that
Leo gained from the Nestorian controversy, which exposed his and
Rome's theological naivety. Leo was introduced to the idea through
Cassian's *De Incarnatione*. But for Leo, the other theological fruits of
the controversy were less nourishing: a mistaken view of Nestorius,
who was dismissed as an adoptionist effectively denying Christ's
divinity, and a limited understanding of Cyril, whose Christology was
effectively assimilated into a western model.

---

[218] Prosper, *Chronicon*, sa 440 (Mommsen, 478).

3

Salvation and Civic Christianity

Introduction

Leo addressed an urban community that had effectively accepted the practice of Christianity. Fifty years before, his predecessors faced a very different Roman population. Leo was now the pastor of the city, not of the Christian minority. He needed to develop a soteriology that offered salvation to ordinary citizens. He taught them that they were saved by participating in the liturgical cycle of the Church and by taking home into daily life the patterns of behaviour that Christ in the liturgy demanded of them. This soteriology married Christian and civic life. Though demanding, it was neither severe nor exclusive. Salvation was more to do with the restoration of relationships, with solidarity in Christ, with mutual service in love, with conformity to the paschal pattern of humility and obedience, than with the illumination of the mind or the imparting of divine glory. Leo showed relatively little interest in the contemplation of scripture or the aspirations of an ascetic minority. He spelled out instead a practical faith for the urban majority. Where did he get this idea of civic Christianity from and what effect did it have on his understanding of salvation?

Monastic and Orator Bishops

One of the reasons why Christology came so sharply into focus and became an area of dispute in the fourth and fifth centuries was the impact of the ascetical reform movement that came to be called monasticism. In the fourth century, as martyrdom ceased to be a risk but remained the defining model of Christian holiness, as

imperial toleration passed over into legal establishment, as Christianity began to be a mass religion in the cities and penetrated more deeply into the countryside, the ancient ascetical life mutated into new forms and spawned a rich literature of its own,[1] achieving new and sharper definition as monasticism. This was one of the major ways that Christianity adjusted to its new position in the Empire, offering a set of new models of holiness. In doing so, it presented a major challenge to the practice of episcopal leadership. From Athanasius onwards,[2] the episcopate in Alexandria and beyond had both to control the new spiritual authority of monastic holy men and also to compete with it.[3] Episcopal authority had to be recast in the image of the monk. The Cappadocians and John Chrysostom sketched out a new episcopal ideal of the monk bishop,[4] which triumphed across the East and influenced the West in the fifth century.[5] Most of the theologians of the later fourth and fifth centuries were either monks or else were closely allied to the monastic movement: Athanasius, the Cappadocians, John Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, Cassian, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, Cyril, Theodoret of Cyrus. The importance of monasticism in Alexandria can be gauged from Theophilus' tergiversations at the start of the Origenist crisis in 399. The downfall of Chrysostom and Nestorius and the dispute provoked by Eutyches reveal the immense strength of monasticism in Constantinople.[6]

---

[1] A. Louth, 'The Literature of the Monastic Movement,' in F. Young, L. Ayres, and A. Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, 2004), 373–81.

[2] D. Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995), 80–141, 245–65; A. Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), 13–34; S. Elm, 'Inventing the "Father of the Church": Gregory of Nazianzus' "Farewell to the Bishops" (Or, 42) in its Historical Context,' in F. J. Felten and N. Jaspert (eds.), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift fur Kaspar Elm zum 70 Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1999), 3–20, shows that Gregory was effectively challenging his successor in Constantinople, Nectarius, by asserting the centrality of Christian philosophy and rhetoric in the office of bishop.

[3] P. Rousseau *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978), 49–67, 125–32, 152–60, 231–4.

[4] Sterk, *Renouncing the World*, 35–160.

[5] C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, 2005), 125–52.

[6] G. Dagron, 'Les Moines et la ville: le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451),' *Travaux et Mémoires*, 4 (1970), 229–76; D. Caner,

Though the bishop exercised power and influence in any city on account of his position,[7] it was more than likely that the monk-bishop would teach a version of Christianity where the aspirations of the monastic life were the highest expression of the gospel: Christianity as a life of ascetical combat, of disengagement from the world, of meditation and absorption in contemplative prayer. The lay majority could only admire and support this life from the outside while being exhorted to embrace an attenuated monastic spirituality themselves. John Chrysostom, on account of his fame as a preacher and the circumstances of his downfall, was the most brilliant exponent of the reform of his cities, Antioch and Constantinople, in accordance with a monastic agenda.[8] As he preached to mould the city's population, he knew he was competing with secular attractions and was fighting a constant battle to keep or increase his congregation.[9] But his attacks on the rich and the dangers of wealth—which were both a major feature of his sermons and central to his monastic agenda—probably alienated too many powerful people.[10]

It is striking that it was not the conversion of the masses but monasticism that set the agenda of theological dispute from at least the Origenist crisis of 399. Pelagianism, the Nestorian crisis, the controversy around Eutyches were all fights between monastic figures about issues that had burning significance inside monasteries but were perhaps less significant for ordinary believers. The full impact of this transformation of the episcopate and theological world has yet to be described, but again from Athanasius onwards monasticism sharpened Christological and soteriological disagreement.[11] Just as the *Life of Antony* and Sulpicius' *Life of Martin* offer very different accounts of holiness and thus implicitly different soteriologies and Christologies, so it is not unlikely that Eutyches would have been unimpressed with Theodoret's *History of the Monks of Syria*.

Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

[7] Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 274–89.

[8] A. M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London, 2004), 27–32.

[9] Ibid. 33–51.   [10] Ibid. 133–70.

[11] S. Elm, '*Virgins of God*': *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 373–85.

The 390s saw an attempt in the West to advocate a similar picture of episcopal life, but monasticism had simply not developed far enough to make it viable. In *Ep* 52,[12] written in 393, Jerome refers to Gregory Nazianzen as his mentor. He was well aware of the vigorous attempt by the Cappadocian reformers to establish a model of the monastic bishop, the contemplative passing on the fruit of meditation in his sermons.[13] In the same year that he wrote *Ep* 52, Jerome produced his catalogue of Christian writers in which he admitted that the only work of Chrysostom's that he had read was his treatise on the priesthood, influenced by Gregory Nazianzen's Oration 2.[14] Within a few years, Sulpicius Severus presented his account of the monastic bishop in his life of Martin of Tours.[15] Many of these threads in the West came together on the desk of one of the most attractive and influential figures in the ascetic movement, Paulinus of Nola, who was influenced by Jerome and had very close connections with Sulpicius and Augustine. As Paulinus was the bishop of a very small town and remained an extremely rich man, he easily adopted the role of local patron as a miniature version of Ambrose at Milan, a grandee fulfilling the demands of monastic poverty by using his wealth as the benefactor and protector of the people.[16] It is thus striking that though he was a monk immersed in the currents of ascetic thought of the age, his episcopal behaviour was more coloured by, rather than defined by, his monastic vocation.[17] Much the same could be said

---

[12] *Ep* 52.8, *CSEL* 54, 429.

[13] Gregory Nazianzen preached several great sermons on the episcopal office. Oration 2 was available in a Latin translation by Rufinus; though he did not translate Orations 42 and 43, it is not impossible that they were available from some other hand as Leo quoted from Oration 13, also untranslated by Rufinus, in 458 (*Ep* 165, *ACO* II.4, 124).

[14] *De Viris Illustribus* 129, PL 23.713, cf. P. Nautin, 'La date du De viris inlustribus,' *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 56 (1961), 33–5.

[15] C. Stancliffe, *St Martin of Tours and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983). The example of Martin may have encouraged bishops to take the new monastic movement seriously and become its patrons, but he did not create a model that Gallic bishops followed; eventually monasteries such as Lerins began to produce bishops, but they behaved very differently from Martin: M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000), 62–4, 82–4.

[16] Trout, *Paulinus*, 120, 133–59, 265–6.

[17] Ibid. 58–9, 65–7, 78–89, 92–3, 133–4; see also C. Conybeare, *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford, 2000), 131–60; J. T. Lienhard,

of Augustine, whose *De Opere Monachorum* draws a very sharp line between monks, who must earn their living and are dedicated to the pursuit of prayer, and the clergy, who are paid by the Church and do pastoral work. In becoming a bishop, Augustine crossed that line into the ranks of the clergy and the impact of his monastic vocation is not easy to trace either on his ministry or on his theology. The Pelagian dispute, where he allied himself with Jerome, is probably the point where his monastic interests were most critically engaged. But it was not the monastic model of the Cappadocians, Jerome, or Sulpicius which was to shape episcopal behaviour in the West but a different version drawn from Ambrose and developed by Augustine which united old ascetical principles with Roman ideals of statesmanship.

Leo was the heir of this Ambrosian mixture. Among notable fifth-century theologians he was unique in neither being a monk himself nor being heavily influenced by the monastic movement, but in this he was typical of Western bishops. Monasticism came late to Rome. Ascetic communities of women and men in the fourth and fifth centuries were few; they made little impact beyond aristocratic circles.[18] In the fourth century, some widows and virgins converted their private houses into ascetic retreats and ascetical masters such as Jerome, Cassian, and Pelagius found enthusiastic followers among them.[19] The condemnation of Jovinian at a Roman synod in the early 390s reveals some of the complex issues aroused by asceticism.[20] He was held to have denied that virginity was a higher state than marriage and that there would be different rewards in heaven for different states of life on earth as well as denying the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary. It is likely that Jovinian and his critics—Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine as well as Pope Siricius—were responding in different

Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism: With a Study of the Chronology of His Works and an Annotated Bibliography, 1879–1976 (Köln-Bonn, 1977) describes the external practice of monastic life at Nola, 70–81, and its animating principles of renunciation, 134–41, without explaining how Paulinus reconciled this with his episcopal vocation.

[18] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 639–43.

[19] G. Jenal, *Italia Ascetica atque Monastica: Das Asketen- und Mönchtum in Italien von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit der Langobarden (ca 150/250–604)*, vol 1 (Stuttgart, 1995), 33–90.

[20] D. G. Hunter, 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: the Case of Jovinian,' *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), 45–64.

ways to the threat of Manichaeism. While Jovinian's condemnation does illustrate that Siricius had placed himself in the ascetical camp with a strong emphasis on the value of virginity and clerical celibacy, monasticism as a distinct profession claiming descent from the oriental monastic movements was deeply controversial in Roman clerical circles.[21] Militant asceticism in the Rome of the 380s and 390s presented a serious challenge to the Church and its attempts to convert the city which only reached some gradual resolution during the pontificates of Anastasius and Innocent who wisely sought to tame rather than alienate the ascetic reformers.[22] Nevertheless, institutionalised monastic life seems to have begun only in Leo's own lifetime and was closely associated with liturgical worship in the basilicas: Sixtus appears to have founded a monastery near the basilica of St Sebastian on the Via Appia and Leo founded one near St Peter's on the Vatican.[23]

Leo was thus immune to the kind of pressures exerted on bishops by monastic leaders in the East, notably in Constantinople, and was not subject to the pull of monastic theology. Rather, he looked to Ambrose and his north Italian disciples for his inspiration in defining episcopal style. This was a model of leadership and Christian life that suited the needs of the newly converted city perhaps rather better than the monastic version pioneered in the East. It was said that the bishops of Rome never preached[24] and there is scarcely any evidence of any of Leo's predecessors preaching.[25] It was Ambrose who introduced into Italy the concept of the bishop as primarily a preacher and he was a preacher of such eloquence that Augustine, the professor of rhetoric, went to observe the performance and hung on every word.[26] Before him, only Zeno of Verona was a preacher of any note and his

[21] Lienhard, *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism*, 119–23; Hunter, *Marriage*, 208–19.

[22] Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital*, 260–320.

[23] Jenal *Italia Ascetica*, 91–2; G. Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries: Notes for the History of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century* (Vatican City, 1957), 163–4, 166–8, 366–7.

[24] Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.19, PG 67.1476.

[25] The only known example is Liberius' preaching when Ambrose's sister took the veil, Ambrose, *De Virginibus* 3.1, PL 16.219–21; but its authenticity is dubious: Y.-M. Duval, 'L'originalité du "De Virginibus" dans le mouvement ascetique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase,' *Ambroise de Milan: Dix Études* (Paris, 1974), 9–66.

[26] *Conf* 5.13.23, *CC* 27, 70–1.

sermons, which are effectively commentaries on the liturgy, betray a view of the world which is narrowly confined to his own ecclesial community in the city.[27] Ambrose spoke to his city and the world.[28] From his tribunal (the same word is used for a magistrate's seat),[29] he both taught his congregation and fought his enemies.[30] Within his circle, Chromatius and Gaudentius[31] were renowned preachers; they were followed in the next generation by Maximus of Turin and Peter Chrysologus in Ravenna. Though none could match Ambrose, these preachers were presenting an image of the bishop as a man of education who reached out to his city by the traditional medium of oratory, constructing great basilicas where they could hold court and from which they could dominate the city. Ambrose built three great basilicas just outside the gates of Milan and significantly altered the topography of the city.[32] Building churches was one of the hallmarks of his associates in northern Italy, engaging the philanthropy of others in ecclesiastical projects[33] and even supplanting the nobility as civic benefactors.[34] In doing so, they could make a claim to be the heirs of the classical tradition baptised into a Christian form. It is likely

[27] Lizzi Testa, 'Christianization and Conversion,' 70–3.

[28] The importance of Ambrose's preaching in building up the Catholic community in Milan in all its social diversity in the last stage of the Arian controversy is brilliantly conveyed in McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 245–51; his distinctive preaching style is described in ibid. 238–40.

[29] The platform on which the governor's throne or the bishop's cathedra was set, in the apse of their respective basilicas, was a *tribunalis*. So Ambrose can say he was *raptus de tribunalibusque atque administrationis infulis ad sacerdotium* (*De Off* I.4) and, according to Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* (PL 14.27–46) when he was chosen as bishop one of the attempts he made to evade office was to set up a *tribunalis* and order torture to be exacted (P.7); as a bishop, his cathedra is *in tribunali* (ibid. 11, 48).

[30] For the political and controversial significance of key sermons, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 63–4, 72–8.

[31] Ibid. 82–6.

[32] R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals*, 79–92; F. Monfrin, 'À propos de Milan Chrétien: siège épiscopale et topographie chrétienne IV-VI siècles,' *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 39 (1991), 7–46; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan*, 226–37; Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed*, 196–202.

[33] Lizzi Testa, 'Christianization and Conversion,' 86–9.

[34] Lizzi, 'Ambrose's Contemporaries,' pp. 157–9, 161, 164–5; so much so that with Maximus of Turin it seems the primary task of the bishop is no longer to preach but to manage church finances: Lizzi Testa, 'Christianization and Conversion,' 89–93; styles of church building varied according to local circumstance but the overall pattern is universal: Humphries, *Communities of the Blessed*, 202–7.

that their sermons preached Sunday by Sunday were central to the establishment of the civic identity of the congregations over which they presided.

Ambrose saw the bishop, and therefore the theologian, as the practical orator, the useful statesman, the civic teacher. In his sadly flawed *De Officiis*, probably written in the late 380s,[35] he had offered an immensely ambitious attempt to baptise Cicero's picture of the statesman in his own work of the same name. Cicero's book is a manual of civic virtue, in which he argued that virtue is natural and useful, that there is no conflict between what is morally right, *honestum*, and what is expedient, *utile*. Ambrose's book adapted this ideal to the clergy of his own day and in doing so did not simply assimilate them to the classical ideal of *civilitas*[36] expected even of emperors.[37] His clergy are to be men of easy, unforced urbanity[38] whose comportment[39] and clothing[40] reveal the modesty of the inner man just as much as his voice[41] and conversation.[42] He was making a point of fundamental importance to the future of Christianity and the exercise of episcopal office: what is useful is what is virtuous[43] and what is virtuous is what is useful.[44] His account of the virtues of justice (which includes liberality, *benevolentia*[45]) and fortitude presents them as civic virtues, building up society and the Church.

Ambrose's baptising of Cicero's orator is no mere surface sprinkling. There is no parallel in Cicero's account for his emphasis that at the heart of the clerical life is a deep absorption in scripture and prayer.[46] Furthermore, the one virtue that cannot be traced back to a classical ideal is celibacy[47] and it is the one requirement that marks the clergy out from the lay society around them. In this, Ambrose indicates his indebtedness to the Christian ascetical tradition and locates the clergy very carefully between two alternatives, Ciceronian

[35] Davidson, *Ambrose De Officiis*, vol 1, 3–5.

[36] Davidson, *Ambrose De Officiis*, vol 1, 73–95.

[37] A.N. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King,' *Journal of Roman Studies*, 72 (1982), 32–48.

[38] *De Off*, 1.84, 104.   [39] Ibid. 1.72–5.   [40] Ibid. 1.83.

[41] Ibid. 1.84, 104.   [42] Ibid. 1.226, 2.86, 96, 1.99–104.

[43] Ibid. 2.22–155.   [44] Ibid. 3.8–138.

[45] Ibid. 1.143–74; spending money on church building is especially commended: 2.110–11.

[46] Ibid. 1.88.   [47] Ibid. 1.68–9, 76–80, 2.27.

and monastic, significantly altering each in producing a distinctive *tertium quid*.[48] The *De Officiis* can best be read therefore as a manifesto for the reform of clerical life, a reaction to the conduct criticised by Ambrosiaster, satirised by Jerome and ridiculed by pagan critics in the Rome of the 380s. Ambrose might almost have had Jerome's *Ep* 22, in mind as he advised the clergy on how they should walk, what they should wear, how they should speak, how they should conduct themselves in private homes, especially women's. But in offering this vision of the clerical life he was also implicitly affirming that all civic life could be baptised.

In the late 390s, shortly after his consecration as a bishop, Augustine penned his own description of Ambrose in his *Confessions*.[49] It is quite consciously a portrait of the model bishop who received him as a father and took delight in his journey like a true bishop.[50] It makes several implicit contrasts: between two bishops, the Manichean Faustus who turns out not only to be a teacher of error but also a man of little education[51] and the learned Ambrose who teaches the truth; between himself as the prize-winning professor of rhetoric and Ambrose as the supremely gifted spokesman of the truth; and between the two aristocrats and intellectuals, Symmachus and Ambrose, the pagan man of affairs and the Christian man of God, though without alluding to the dispute over the Altar of Victory in which they had then been embroiled.[52] Augustine's portrait of Ambrose in the *Confessions* reads like a practical illustration of the model bishop found in *De Officiis*: the preacher and teacher,[53] overwhelmed with the business of office,[54] who deals with problems by letter[55] yet who refreshes his spirit by reading and whose most distinctive and problematic virtue is celibacy.[56]

---

[48] Hunter, *Marriage*, 219–24.   [49] *Conf* 5.13.23–14.24, *CC* 27, 70–1.

[50] Ibid. 5.13.23: *Suscepit me paterne ille homo dei et peregrinationem meam satis episcopaliter dilexit, CC* 27, 70.

[51] Ibid. 5.6.11, *CC* 27, 62–3.

[52] The contrast between the three is caught in the carefully balanced sentences *me probatum praefectus tunc Symmachus mittere. Et ueni Mediolanium ad Ambrosium episcopum* in *Conf* 5.13.23, *CC* 27, 70.

[53] Ibid. 5.13.23, *CC* 27, 70–1, 6.1.1, *CC* 27, 73–4; 6.3.4, *CC* 27, 76; 6.4.6, *CC* 27, 77.

[54] Ibid. 6.11.18, *CC* 27, 86.   [55] Ibid. 9.5.13, *CC* 27, 140.

[56] Ibid. 6.3.3, *CC* 27, 75.

Augustine's description of Ambrose is far from naïve. It too was a contribution to the campaign to define the virtues of the clerical life that brought together most of the major figures of the age. So too was the book he began at about the same time as the *Confessions*, the *De Doctrina Christiana*, a work for preachers, that is primarily bishops. It was an oratorical treatise for the kind of educated, ascetical bishops that both he and Ambrose hoped to promote. It is a measured defence of Christian rhetoric, his baptised version of Cicero's *De Oratore*, defining and delimiting the skills of the Christian orator into the classical categories of discovering and delivering, *invenire* and *proferre*.[57] Cicero's *De Officiis* and *De Oratore* are closely connected; *De Doctrina Christiana* could be seen, either deliberately or not, as a companion to Ambrose's *De Officiis*.[58] In Books 1–3, Augustine's preacher brings to *inventio* both love of God and a carefully judged engagement with pagan knowledge. In Book 4, which he was to conclude only in 426–7, he carefully adapts Cicero's *De Oratore* in his discussion of preaching.[59]

Fifteen years later, perhaps twenty-five years later, Augustine commissioned a biography of Ambrose from his deacon Paulinus, the first proper biography of a bishop simply because he was a bishop.[60] This was probably more than an act of homage to Ambrose: it was a further contribution to the establishment of an Ambrosian episcopal ideal. According to Paulinus, Ambrose is a preacher[61] but even more a debater who confronts and is confronted by his enemies.[62] Despite a number of encounters with demons[63] and a few miracles,[64] he is not

---

[57] C. Schäublin, '*De Doctrina Christiana*: A Classic of Western Culture?' in D.W.H. Arnold and P. Bright (eds.), '*De Doctrina Christiana*': *A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, 1995), 47–67.

[58] Augustine had read *De Officiis* by 404 (*Ep*, 82.21 *CSEL*, 34.373, where he says it is full of useful teaching); given the emphases in his sketch of Ambrose in the *Confessions*, it is not unlikely he had read it earlier.

[59] C. Harrison, 'The Rhetoric of Scripture and Preaching: Classical Decadence or Christian Aesthetic?' in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.) *Augustine and his Critics: Essays in honour of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2000), 214–30.

[60] É. Lamirande, *Paulin de Milan et la 'Vita Ambrosii': Aspects de la religion sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris and Montreal, 1983) suggests 412–13; A. Paredi, 'Paulinus of Milan,' *Sacris Erudiri*, 14 (1963), 206–30, suggests 422.

[61] *V Amb* 17.   [62] Ibid. 18, 23, 33.   [63] Ibid. 21, 33, 43, 48.

[64] Ibid. 28, 44, 48.

really presented as a holy man like Martin of Tours.[65] Rather, in his
character and activities he is a Christian statesman. When, reluctantly,
he gives up the office of prefect and is ordained bishop, he is told
by his patron, the great politician and jurist Probus, not to act as a
judge but as a bishop.[66] But in a broad sense he does act as a Chris-
tian judge, promoting justice by forgiveness and bringing people to
repentance—the most dramatic example being the Emperor Theodo-
sius,[67] but this is only one of many examples.[68] The preacher, debater,
and judge is usually depicted in his basilicas. They are contrasted with
palaces,[69] with the amphitheatre,[70] and, in a much misunderstood
passage, with synagogues.[71] It is in the basilica that he is elected
bishop[72] and is brought after his death, where the neophytes see him
enthroned or ascending.[73] After his death, he was seen praying in the
basilica he had built in Florence.[74] The basilica is a place of refuge
for sinners,[75] of judgment,[76] of conflict with heretics, emperors,[77] or
demons:[78] a fortress.[79] Basilicas are identified with Ambrose himself
in these conflicts; he sanctifies them with sensational finds of the
bodies of martyrs.[80] When he was buried in the Basilica Ambrosiana,
next to the tomb of saints Gervase and Protase, on Easter Sunday 397,
he identified himself with the martyrs, the building and above all the
risen Christ, God the Word. He had become what Paulinus described
Antony, Paul, and Martin as being at the start of his biography of

---

[65] E. Elm, *Die Macht der Weisheit: Das Bild des Bischofs in der 'Vita Augustini'
des Possidius und anderen spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Bischofsviten* (Leiden,
2003) does not draw such a sharp distinction with monastic biographies but does
show that these early bishops' lives present a new image of the bishop and his authority
based both on his moral stature and his office.

[66] *V Amb* 8.   [67] Ibid. 23–4.

[68] Ibid. 11, 12, 13, 17, 20, 31, 34, 39, and the particularly interesting case in ibid. 43
where he acts as magistrate yet also prophetical judge, cf. Mclynn, *Ambrose of Milan*,
286–7.

[69] *V Amb* 15, 37.   [70] Ibid. 34.

[71] Ibid. 22–3; his opposition to the bishop having to pay for the reconstruction
of the synagogue at Callinicum is not, *pace* Moorhead, *Ambrose* 182–92, a sign of
anti-semitism but rather an assertion of the bishop's status as church-builder not
synagogue builder. McLynn's brilliant reading of the political advantage of the dispute,
Ambrose of Milan, 298–309 fails to see the significance of the argument about clergy
doing curial service (p. 302).

[72] *V Amb* 6.   [73] Ibid. 48.   [74] Ibid. 50.   [75] Ibid. 31, 34, 43.
[76] Ibid. 43.   [77] Ibid. 11, 18, 23.   [78] Ibid. 20, 33, 43.
[79] Ibid. 12, 13, 20.   [80] Ibid. 14, 29, 32.

Ambrose: *muri ecclesiarum sunt et eloquentiae fontes*: the walls of the churches and the founts of eloquence.[81]

Though Augustine adapted Ambrose's episcopal vision and made it more monastic, he still insisted on Ambrose's central contention, that there was no conflict between ascetic virtue and civic usefulness. A monk, a *servus Dei*, before his election as bishop, Augustine expected his own clergy to live in a quasi-monastic community, not only living in celibacy but also sharing their possessions.[82] This development of the Ambrosian model was popularised in Possidius' life of Augustine, the second biography of a bishop produced in the West. His friend and fellow bishop, Possidius presented Augustine as Ambrose's disciple.[83] He is a preacher first and last[84] and, even more, a debater.[85] We are told he is a great writer[86] but he is not really presented as a theologian still less as a miracle-working holy man.[87] Like Ambrose, Augustine is presented as an orator, preaching and arguing in public. We get little sense of either of them working in the study or the library, but a very vivid impression of them speaking and debating in the basilica. Like Ambrose, he is a judge and is shown examining Manichaeans in his basilica and spending long hours hearing cases and struggling to be just.[88] On the other hand, we are told explicitly that Augustine was never much interested in building[89] and the common life Augustine shared with his clergy is much stressed.[90] Possidius, who had been a member of Augustine's *monasterium* before he became bishop of Hippo, describes how this group produced ten bishops in North Africa.[91] Augustine's role as clerical reformer and trainer of bishops is thus stressed.

This model of the orator bishop was so compelling that eventually, by the third quarter of the fifth century, it could even draw a senatorial intellectual such as Sidonius Apollinaris from a literary and political career into the episcopal office. Just one year after holding the position of Urban Prefect in Rome in 468–9, Sidonius became Bishop of Clermont. There he set about transforming the topography

---

[81] Ibid. 1.   [82] S. Lancel, *St Augustine* (London, 2002), 228–32.
[83] *Vita Aug* 24, 27.   [84] Ibid. 5, 9, 15, 31.
[85] Ibid. 6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18.   [86] Ibid. 7, 28.
[87] Cf. ibid. 29, for his one, unwilling, miracle.   [88] Ibid. 16, 19.
[89] Ibid. 24.   [90] Ibid. 22–6.   [91] Ibid. 11.

and calendar of the city with the creation of holy sites linked by processions through the streets, following a liturgical year that super-seded the round of old pagan festivals, all of which he interpreted for his congregation by regular preaching.[92] While he adopted a simpler, less elaborately adorned, prose style as befitted his new position,[93] he brought both careers together in his stalwart leadership of the defence of the besieged city in the years 471–5.[94] It is noteworthy that in his time the cult of Martin of Tours was revived and promoted with less emphasis on the divisively monastic character of Martin's episcopal style.[95]

Sidonius, whose devotion to Rome was second to none,[96] was probably profoundly affected by the papal style he had met in the city. Long before his day, the concept of the bishop and clergy as ascetic public servants had affected the outlook and behaviour of the Roman priests and deacons and especially of the popes themselves. From Siricius' first decretal in 385, the pattern and structures of clerical life were defined more sharply. From Anastasius, the popes asserted their position as the champions of the ascetical movement but one that no longer posed any threat to the ordinary patterns of lay life. By the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, a sharply defined *cursus* had been established for the clerical career.[97] Recruited in childhood, the clergy were lectors until they were 20, acolytes and subdeacons until they were 30, and thus only became priests in middle age. The Roman priesthood[98] was a small, tightly knit body, comprising a number of extensive dynasties. Though not of the senatorial class, many of them were rich, leaving fine tombs and monuments. They played a major role in civic euergetism. They show all the signs of having absorbed the Ambrosian ideal of civic virtue in public life. By contrast, the deacons were a separate and far smaller elite, usually not related to the priestly families. It appears that there were two distinct career paths for those destined to be priests and those destined to be deacons. The two groups could come to blows, as they did on the death of Zosimus in 418, but the kind of criticism

---

[92] J. Harries, *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* (Oxford, 1994), 191–206.
[93] Ibid. 220. [94] Ibid. 222–38. [95] Ibid. 118–21.
[96] See his eulogy of Rome in his panegyric of Avitus: C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius Apollinaris and his Age* (Oxford, 1933), 33–5.
[97] Pietri, *Roma Christiana*, 690–6. [98] Ibid. 708–18.

levelled against their predecessors by Jerome and Ambrosiaster is not heard in the fifth century. By 440, the Bishop of Rome could make a claim to be the spokesman of a civic interpretation of the Gospel, exemplified in his own role as the greatest public servant of the city.

Romanitas

Leo was the epitome of Ambrose's conception of the orator bishop. His aim was to shape the life of his city as a preacher in his basilicas. His message was a Gospel for the ordinary citizen,[99] a civic Christianity, which baptised not only individuals but also society and its culture. He was the embodiment of *Romanitas*:[100] the most brilliant Latin stylist of his day[101] and without rival the greatest living Roman.[102] His personality and characteristic behaviour—restrained, balanced, moderate, and indomitable—have been described as typically Roman.[103] The administrative structures of the Church, above all of the papal chancellery, were a model of Roman organisation.[104] It is therefore no surprise that the language in which he expressed fundamental presuppositions about the relationship of the Gospel and the world influenced too the way he expressed his theological ideas.

[99] J. M. Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity: Leo the Great's Theology of Redemption* (Strathfield, Australia, 2005) offers an excellent synthesis of Leo's teaching, though it neglects its historical development.

[100] Ibid. 185–203.

[101] F. di Capua, *Il Ritmo Prosaico nelle Lettere dei Papi e nei Documenti della Cancellaria Romana dal IV al XIV Secolo*, vol 1 (Rome, 1937), 3–204; 'San Leone Letterato e Artista,' *Scritti Minori*, vol 2 (Rome, 1959), 162–170.

[102] J. Oroz Reta, 'S. Leon Magno, Papa de la Romanidad,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 163–91, esp. 189–91.

[103] Jalland, *Life and Times of Leo the Great*, 420–2, stresses the indomitable, logical, thorough, competent aspects of his character which upheld 'the fine tradition of Roman dignity'; H. Rahner, 'Leo der Grosse, der Papst des Konzils,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon* (Würzburg, 1951), 323–39, stresses the key quality of *moderatio*, repeatedly urged by Leo upon others as well as shown by himself, which he sees as distinctively Roman.

[104] P. McShane, *La Romanitas et le pape Léon le Grand: l'apport culturel des institutions impérials à la formation des institutions ecclésiastiques* (Tournai, 1979), 235–377.

Leo wrote a chaste, conservative Latin[105] whose rhythms reveal a mastery of the art of rhetoric[106] yet who never makes any allusion to pagan literature. He is far more austere than Ambrose, Jerome, or Augustine in eschewing classical references. It is unlikely that this was simply a sign of ignorance; rather, Leo has a view of the baptised civic culture that must transform the use of language rather than juxtapose the Christian and the pagan. Just as Sta Maria Maggiore was a new building not a converted temple, yet a building in the revived classical style, so Leo's sermons and letters are couched in classical style that makes no obeisance to the pagan past. It was a Latin adapted to the age: more concise and tightly knit than Cicero, with shorter sentences, vivacious and epigrammatic. Leo developed a powerful style that conveyed emotion as much as thought: colourful, expressive, and resonant.[107] He achieved a metrical, sonorous effect by using a variety of periods and clausulae.[108]

Leo's style is expressive of the man and his theological outlook was bound up with the way he expressed his ideas. He writes a very distinctive but impersonal Latin. The overall impression of Leo's sermons and letters is finality. His thought falls naturally into paragraphs: their structure and content are complex, their phrasing dense and deliberate, characterised by the balancing of words and phrases and careful attention to rhythm. His prose has an architectural structure which conveys the impression that his ideas too are systematic. This was especially important for a theologian whose first genre was the sermon. He also uses distinctive grammatical constructions not only to add grace to his prose but also to underline his theological points. The separation of auxiliaries from participles, prepositions from their nouns, clauses from their antecedents, and the omission of connectives are among his most typical stylistic devices. His prose is therefore stamped everywhere with the hallmarks of balance and antithesis, which suggest the relationships between ideas striving for equipoise and mediation. The development of the ideas that he

---

[105] M. Mueller, *The Vocabulary of Pope St Leo the Great* (Washington, DC, 1943) shows he was innocent of coining neologisms.

[106] W.J. Halliwell, *The Style of Pope St Leo the Great* (Washington, DC, 1939).

[107] Di Capua, 'San Leone Letterato,' 165–6.

[108] E.g. *Il Ritmo Prosaico*, 17–36, is a detailed analysis of *Ep* 165, to the Emperor Leo.

shapes architecturally in his distinguished prose is not determined by scripture but by the logic of the doctrine. He is not writing exegetical homilies. Nevertheless, his scriptural allusions, often no more than a short phrase, sometimes an entire verse, are also carefully considered. They are used to reinforce his presentation of doctrine, to give it greater depth and resonance.

Furthermore, the final version of each has been polished and the collection as a whole has been carefully selected. Many of them exist in a second edition with interesting, though subtle, alterations to the text.[109] In content and subject matter, they resemble Maximus of Turin's or Augustine's liturgical sermons, expounding the seasons and feasts of the liturgy; in their style, they resemble the elegant, exegetical homilies delivered to the imperial court at Ravenna by Peter Chrysologus. Like Maximus and Augustine in his pastoral sermons, Leo expounds not scripture directly but what the liturgy offers him, namely the Church and its life. Leo is thus the supreme orator bishop not only in his mastery of rhetoric but also in speaking about the Church to the city.

Who Can Be Saved? Grace and Predestination

For Christianity to become the natural religion of the city, it was imperative to proclaim a Gospel that offered God's grace and its demands to all the citizens. Rome's espousal of Ambrose's ideal of the orator bishop preaching civic Christianity thus had a profound effect on the Apostolic See's position in the Pelagian disputes. Of course, from the time of Zosimus onwards, the question of Rome's consistency was bound up with the defence of the Roman curia's authority; but, though Rome was repeatedly anxious to align itself with Augustine, a significant gap always separated them. Against Pelagius, Caelestius, and Julian of Eclanum, Rome insisted on the reality of original sin and the necessity of infant baptism. Nevertheless, Innocent's condemnation of Pelagius in 417 was less explicit than the North African condemnations of the previous year.[110] Zosimus'

---

[109] R. Dolle, 'Les sermons en double édition de S. Léon le Grand,' *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 45 (1978), 5–33.

[110] Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius*, 124–33.

acquittal of Caelestius and Pelagius later that same year suggests a certain agnosticism about the central issues of the debate;[111] it was only in his *Tractoria* of 418 that he appears to have accepted Augustine's teaching on inherited original sin.[112] The gap widened into a gulf just as Rome proved most determined to reaffirm the alignment in 418. As Zosimus was beating his retreat and prominent members of the Roman clergy were hurrying to profess their agreement with Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo pushed the debate into new territory. The presbyter Sixtus, suspected of Pelagian sympathies, made a démarche to Aurelius of Carthage in 418, conveyed by Leo, and to Augustine; the latter provoked a lengthy reply which taught the doctrine of predestination at length for the first time and in very stark terms.[113] This opened the way for Augustine to deny that God wanted the salvation of all mankind: a teaching that could never be given official Roman endorsement.

This issue became clear in the later 420s. The letter of 418 to Sixtus provoked reactions among the monks of Hadrumetum, further round the coast from Hippo, in the mid-420s which precipitated the final phase of the Pelagian crisis. Some of them felt it obviated the freedom of the will; in response, Augustine wrote for them *On Grace and Free Will*. Reading this, some felt that it excluded any just rebuke for sinners; in response, Augustine wrote *On Rebuke and Grace*. Augustine argued that though the number of the elect was fixed, no one knew who was predestined to salvation[114] and so even though rebuke would only benefit the predestined[115] all should accept it as either beneficial for the elect or worthy punishment for sinners.[116] This was not encouraging advice to a monastic community who had chosen a life of discipline and correction. But the Bishop of Hippo did not shrink from the logic of then asserting that since God only extended his grace to those who were saved, then God in fact only willed the salvation of the elect.[117] This reinterpretation of 1 Tim 2.4, which says God, 'wills all men to be saved,' so that 'all' meant 'the elect,' was to dominate the last phase of the controversy. From North Africa, the controversy spilled over into monastic circles in Gaul.

---

[111] Ibid. 141–6.   [112] Ibid. 214–18.   [113] *Ep* 194, *CSEL* 57, 176–214.
[114] *De Cor et Grat* 13.39–40, PL 44.940–1.
[115] Ibid. 7.14, 9.25, PL 44.924–5, 931.   [116] Ibid. 14.43, PL 44.942.
[117] Ibid. 14.44, PL 44.943.

Augustine was alerted to the reactions to his teaching in Marseilles by Prosper of Aquitaine[118] and responded with his last two treatises, *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance*. Here he made a very significant concession: that his teaching on predestination and the restricted saving will of God might cause disquiet had no positive pastoral value and should be accepted with mute obedience to the inscrutability of divine providence;[119] therefore it should not be preached to ordinary folk.[120]

Augustine thus acknowledged that the logic of his theology was potentially pastorally dangerous. Augustine's picture of a God whose saving love did not reach out to all humanity was not only repugnant; it was also an insuperable obstacle to accomplishing the mass conversion of the Empire. This made its rejection inevitable. It afforded no foundation for the development of a civic Christianity for ordinary people. It implied that if many in the crowds thronging the basilicas were sinners, it was not because they resisted God but rather that he was not really offering them grace in the Church's preaching, discipline, and sacraments. The success of the whole enterprise of converting the cities depended on asserting a universal call and the efficacy of the Church's ministrations.

Thus, while successive popes maintained the condemnation of Pelagianism, they never accepted Augustine's later teaching on predestination. Celestine sent Germanus of Auxerre to Britain in 429 to root out Pelagianism,[121] yet, when lobbied by Prosper of Aquitaine in 431 to endorse Augustine's doctrine of the restricted salvific will of God, Celestine was ready enough to canonise Augustine as a theologian, while carefully avoiding any explicit approval of the doctrine under dispute.[122] As archdeacon, Leo dissuaded Sixtus III from lifting the excommunication of Julian of Eclanum and the rebel bishops in 439.[123] His first letters in 442 were devoted to attacks on Pelagian fellow travellers.[124] He rejected the semi-pelagian theory of *initium fidei*[125] which attempted to identify a preliminary point in commitment to Christ before the action of grace, in a characteristically

[118] Augustine, *Ep* 225, *CSEL* 58, 60–1.   [119] *De Praed Sanct* 16, PL 44.983–5.

[120] *De Dono Persev* 22.57–61, PL 45.1028–30.

[121] Prosper, *Chron*, sa 429 (Mommsen, 472).   [122] *Ep* 21 PL 50.528–30.

[123] Prosper, *Chron*, sa 439 (Mommsen, 477).

[124] *Ep* 1, PL 54.594–7, *Ep* 2, PL 54.597–8.   [125] *Ep* 1.3, PL 54.595.

lapidary formula: *Quae utique nisi gratis detur, non est gratia, sed merces retributioque meritorum.*[126] Yet the repeated refrain in all his teaching is that grace is offered to all.

God's universal compassion and the universal duty of love is a major theme in Leo's sermons.[127] He exhorted his flock, especially in the December and Lenten fasts, to love everyone as God loves everyone. There is a duty not only to love the members of the household of the faith but all men, who are to be pitied in their troubles as they share a common nature.[128] The divine compassion shows itself in the works of men[129] and so we should imitate our maker and put his divine actions into effect by feeding the hungry and clothing the naked.[130] We are called to love all, even the wicked, as God loves them.[131] The basis of the call to universal love is God's remaking his image in us, making us like himself; the one creator has made one human nature and God's will is always loving.[132] The image of God shows itself in the works of men.[133] It is not the scale of a man's crime that should be considered but our common nature, and so everyone should be loved.[134] Thus it is our own nature that we love in others; as the Lord came to call not the righteous but sinners, so we should love all people.[135] There was nothing here that Augustine would not have agreed with, but Leo could preach this without fear that he would have to explain how God both loved everyone and yet only wanted to save some and not all. The continuity that Leo points to between the common nature of humanity, loved by Christ and to be loved by all, and the image of God in man remade by loving imitation of Christ provides him with a platform for an ethic for the Christian citizen spelled out in these sermons for the great shared fasts of December and Lent.

This was rooted in his Christology; for Leo, the Divine Word took on universal human nature and thus, in principle, saved all humanity. In him, the covenant with Abraham was fulfilled; in Old Testament

---

[126] 'Whatever is not freely given is not grace but the reward and payment of merits.'
[127] A.K. Squire, 'Universal Compassion in Leo the Great,' *Studia Patristica*, 13 (1975), 280–5.
[128] *Tr* 41.3 (21 Feb. 443).
[129] *Tr* 42.2 (12 Mar. 444).
[130] *Tr* 43.4 (25 Feb. 445).
[131] *Tr* 20.2–3 (after 445).
[132] *Tr* 12.1–2 (17 Dec. 450).
[133] *Tr* 95.3, 7 (446–61).
[134] *Tr* 47.3 (21 Feb. 454).
[135] *Tr* 48.2 (13 Mar. 455).

figures, Christ's work was already active.[136] His Christmas sermons often insist that he had to become man to save mankind: he had to become a son of man for believers to become sons of God.[137] The Epiphany sermons often then go on to assert that salvation is now offered to all the peoples.[138] In sermons separated by just a few days, he observed that in Christ all were crucified and all rose from the dead,[139] and therefore to no one among the sick has the victory of the Cross been denied.[140] To Juvenal of Jerusalem he remarked that to restore life to all he undertook the cause of all.[141] The universality of Christ's offer of salvation is a theme running throughout Leo's career.[142] There is little sign of evolution in Leo's talk of grace.[143] From the beginning he is clear that grace is necessary for salvation, which is depicted regularly as a transformation effected by grace,[144] needed by all,[145] offered to all.[146] He deliberately avoids the issue of predestination and the restricted salvific will;[147] he simply says that though not all are saved, all are called.[148] He often underlines the reciprocity of grace and freedom[149] and lays out three phases of the

[136] This is the most original insight of M. Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 25–50.

[137] *Tr* 26.2 (450): *qui ideo filius hominis est factus, ut nos filii Dei esse possimus*; cf. also 23.3 (442), 24.2, 3 (443), 25.5 (444); cf. also 72.2 (21 Apr. 444), 48.1 (13 Mar. 455).

[138] *Tr* 32.4 (442), 33.1, 5 (443), 35.1, 4 (445), 36.2 (451), 38.1, 7 (452).

[139] *Tr* 64.3 (5 Apr. 453): *Singulares quippe in singulis mortes fuerunt, nec alterius quisquam debitum suo fine persoluit, cum inter filios hominum unus solus Dominus noster Iesus Christus extiterit, in quo omnes crucifixi, omnes mortui, omnes sepulti, omnes sint etiam suscitati*; *omnes* appears to be contrasted with *singulares mortes* and *quisquam*, giving it universal and not only Christian application, hence the force of the *etiam*.

[140] *Tr* 66.3 (10 Apr. 453) *Nulli infirmorum cruces est negata Victoria, nec quisquam est cui non Christi auxilietur oratio.*

[141] *Ep* 139.3 (4 Feb. 454), *ACO* II.4, 93.

[142] *Tr* 54.3 (5 Apr. 442), 57.1 (31 Mar. 443), 71.4 (4 Apr. 443), 58.4 (16 Apr. 444), 59.1, 2, 5 (19 Apr. 444), 61.5 (4 Apr. 445), 62.4, 5 (16 Mar. 452), 63. 5, 6 (19 Mar. 452), 67.2 (28 Mar. 454), 74.5 (17 May 445).

[143] Hervé de l'Incarnation, 'La grâce dans l'oeuvre de S. Léon le Grand' *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 22 (1955), 17–55, 193–212.

[144] Ibid. 28–34.   [145] Ibid. 43–6.   [146] Ibid. 51–3.

[147] Ibid. 51; P. L. Barclift, 'Predestination and Divine Foreknowledge in the Sermons of Pope Leo the Great,' *Church History*, 62 (1993), 5–21, esp. 11–17.

[148] Hervé, 'La grâce,' 53–4; Barclift, 'Predestination,' 10, 16–17.

[149] Hervé, 'La grâce,' 194–5, 200–1.

action of grace: the first enables the initiation of good works in a free will, the second inspires people to produce good works and the third enables their completion.[150]

It is likely, on account of his contacts with the two leading protagonists, Cassian and Prosper, that Leo was well aware of the unfolding debate in the 430s about predestination and the universal salvific will of God. He agreed with Cassian on the universality of the salvific will[151] while avoiding his inconsistencies about the necessity of divine grace at the inception of faith.[152] Prosper gradually shifted from his intransigent Augustinianism,[153] falling silent about predestination in his *Contra Collatorem* against Cassian,[154] then conceding that the basis for divine election is foreseen merit and for reprobation foreseen sins in his *Pro Augustino Responsiones* against Vincent of Lerins,[155] and finally asserting that the single core doctrine is the gratuity of divine grace in the pseudo-Celestine *Capitula*[156] before adopting wholeheartedly a view of God's universal salvific will in the *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium*.[157] In accepting that God did want the salvation of all, Prosper had not solved the problem of why there are people who are not saved. He now distinguished between the grace offered to all in the universal call to salvation and the grace then only given to those who were to be saved in practice: he had merely shifted the problem from why God did not want the salvation of all to why God did not make his will effective. It was not an account of the workings of grace that commended itself to Leo.[158] What is most striking is that while Leo was unambiguous in asserting the universality of the divine salvific will, he did not feel it necessary to speculate further why that universal will should not be universally efficacious. Nevertheless, though the dating of these works by Prosper

[150] Barclift, 'Predestination,' 19, cf. *tr* 72.1 (21 Apr. 444).

[151] *Conl* 13.7, *CSEL* 13, 369–70.

[152] Ibid. 13.3, *CSEL* 13, 364, insists grace is always necessary, stressed by Barclift, 'Predestination,' 19, who says he denies *initium fidei*; but at 13.9, *CSEL*, 13, 373–4, Cassian insists on the independent strength of the will, stressed by Hervé, 'La grâce,' 50, who claims he asserts *initium fidei.*

[153] M. Cappuyns, 'Le premier représentant de l'Augustinisme médiéval, Prosper d'Aquitaine,' *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 1 (1929), 309–37.

[154] Ibid. 321–2.   [155] Ibid. 325–6.   [156] Ibid. 328–9.
[157] Ibid. 329–34.   [158] Ibid. 330–4.

is largely speculative, it seems more than possible that the evolution in his thought owed much to his increasing contact with Leo.[159]

Leo's thinking owed less, however, to the participants in the Pelagian dispute than to the pastoral imperative of finding a practical and credible doctrine of salvation. He made no contribution to the controversy; he made no attempt to find a solution to the central conundrum of why only some were saved if God wanted the salvation of all; he was happy using imprecise language about the operation of divine grace. But he did preach a civic Christianity, a faith for all men, which baptised their traditional virtues and did not remove them from their customary responsibilities.

Christ and Society

If Christ saved the world, what was the relationship between Christ and society? Though Augustine's soteriology, of Christ creating a community of love and mediating to it peace and justice, which was in turn a gift for the world,[160] had inevitable social and political implications, his answer to that question was a sophisticated and at times ambivalent discussion of the distinctions between the City of God and the earthly city and between the City of God and the visible Church. Leo was far less interested in such distinctions. Though he often talked about the Jews as the opposite of Christians, he usually referred to them as biblical figures rather than contemporaries.[161] He seldom spoke about modern pagans. Like Jews, they tended to be discussed as historical figures from Rome's evil past. Similarly, the distinction between the Church as the mystical body of Christ and the Church as the assembly of worshippers, including sinners, was not one that he chose to examine. On the other hand, he was clear that outside the Church there was no purity or holiness.[162] Nevertheless, instead of looking for tensions and differences, Leo was inclined to stress the continuities between Gospel and culture, Church and society, providence and history, nature and grace.

[159] M. Cappuyns, 'L'auteur du "De Vocatione Omnium Gentium",' *Revue Bénédictine*, 39 (1927), 198–226, esp. 222–6.

[160] Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society.*

[161] Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et les Juifs.'   [162] E.g. *Tr* 79.2 (31 May 453).

Like Prudentius and Orosius,[163] Leo saw the Roman Empire as an instrument of divine providence but he was far less inclined than they had been to canonise the *imperium* as itself a Christian entity.[164] Rather, he hoped for a harmonious relationship of collaboration between Church and state:[165] writing to congratulate Marcian on his accession in 451, he expressed his confidence that peace among the Christian princes would destroy both heresy and the threat of the barbarians.[166] In 453, he told the Augusta Pulcheria that in the princes of his time he recognised 'not only imperial power but also priestly learning.'[167] He was quite clear that Rome had been founded in fratricidal strife and that its ancient paganism was an ocean of wicked superstition.[168] In becoming mistress of the world, Rome had also become the slave of the world's errors; but Rome was used without knowing it for the expansion of Christianity.[169] It was Peter's Rome, a city subdued by a man frightened of Caiaphas' servant, that fulfilled God's providence but it was chosen because it had come to dominate the world.[170] There is evidence that he regarded his own age as tragic and anti-Christian but that he hoped for a great Christian future in which virtue would triumph over vice.[171] Leo had sublime confidence that the Church would endure the tribulations of the age.[172] He was thus able to interpret Attila's incursion into Italy in 451 as a trial that would soon be overcome[173] and with hindsight to see him as the scourge of God.[174] It was not so much that the victory

---

[163] F. Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions* (Rome, 1967), 224–7, 278–84.

[164] P. Stockmeier, '*Imperium* bei Papst Leo dem Grossen,' *Studia Patristica*, 3 (1961), 413–20.

[165] Ibid. 418; Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, 317–19.

[166] *Ep* 82.1 (24 Apr. 451), *ACO* II.4, 41.

[167] *Ep* 116 (21 Mar. 453), *ACO* II,4, 68–9.   [168] *Tr* 82.2, 4 (29 Jun. 441).

[169] Ibid. 2, 3.   [170] Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, 319–22.

[171] C. Bartnik, 'L'interpretation théologique de la crise de l'Empire Romain par Léon le Grand,' *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 63 (1968), 745–84, probably overstates Leo's pessimism and certainly relies too much on jeremiads from Jerome.

[172] *Ep* 15.10 (21 Jul. 447), PL 54.685: *Et ideo Ecclesia, quae corpus est Christi, nihil de mundi inaequalitatibus metuit, quia nihil de bonis temporalibus concupiscit; nec timet inani strepitu fatorum gravari, quae patientia tribulationum novit augeri.*

[173] *Tr* 36.3 (6 Jan. 451); *Epp* 83 (9 Jun. 451), TD 15, 67; 90 (26 Jun. 451), TD 15, 77; 91 (26 Jun. 451), TD 15, 81.

[174] *Ep* 113 (10 Mar. 453), *ACO* II.4, 65.

of the state guaranteed the future of the Church, but rather the victory of the Church guaranteed the future of the state.

History—the rise of the Roman Empire and its conversion to Christianity—is thus seen as the working out of providence. In much the same way, Leo saw Christianity as the fulfilment of old Roman virtue rather than a radical break with all that was good in the past. Unlike some bishops, most famously John Chrysostom,[175] he did not challenge social hierarchy or the enjoyment of property. He was very shocked, for example, at the ordination of slaves to the priesthood whose low rank would contaminate the ministry.[176] Lent was a season when the power of masters should be gentler and the service of slaves more dedicated.[177] He remarked casually that it was entirely right that the houses of kings and the courts of high officials are richly adorned.[178] He declared confidently that wealth was good, a gift of God to be well used,[179] and that poverty had its snares as well as riches.[180] God could have arranged that the poor should never be in want but in fact has chosen in his providence that there should always be the rich to be generous and the poor to be patient.[181] Preaching on *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, he observed that the Lord had been careful to clarify which poor he meant—the humble.[182] He observed that Jesus never spoke against the Roman law and paid his taxes,[183] while the Jewish crowd who cried out that they had no king but Caesar spoke as though they were really devoted to Roman law.[184] Individuals should imitate the clemency of their rulers in Lent, for private laws should not be more rigorous than public ones.[185] His most complete presentation of Christian virtue for ordinary citizens was his sermon on the Beatitudes, preached at some point between

---

[175] Hartney, *John Chrysostom*, 133–70.

[176] *Ep* 4 (10 Oct. 443), PL 54.611: *sacrum ministerium talis consortii vilitate polluitur.*

[177] *Tr* 40.5 (1 Mar. 442).   [178] *Tr* 48.1 (13 Mar. 455).

[179] *Tr* 10.1 (Nov. 444): *Nam diuitiae, quod ad ipsas species earum atque substantias pertinet, bonae sunt, et humanae societati plurimum prosunt, cum a benuolis habentur et largis*; cf. 20.2 (Dec., after 445?).

[180] *Tr* 49.1 (17 Feb. 457?).   [181] *Tr* 89.6 (Sep. 444).

[182] *Tr* 95.2 (446–61?).   [183] *Tr* 61.1 (4 Apr. 445).

[184] *Tr* 59.2 (19 Apr. 444).

[185] *Tr* 40.5 (1 Mar. 442); he also says that private mercy should surpass that of the state 47.3 (21 Feb. 454), 48.4 (13 Mar. 455).

446 and 461.[186] High-minded, somewhat puritanical, its message is that the virtuous man is humble, grieves over his and others' sins, and loves justice and mercy, seeking peace which is obedience to the will of God. In other words, Leo did not think that the Gospel subverted class, power, or property. His civic Christianity presented no threat to the established order. Instead, it transformed it.

The collaboration of Church and government was a mutually beneficial relationship of *do ut des*.[187] Similarly, almsgiving, a very common theme in bishops' sermons,[188] could be presented as beneficial to the donors by redefining the gifts they could receive from the poor in return.[189] Christian almsgiving differed from pagan euergetism in quantity and specificity, in the generosity of donors and in its associations with community leadership.[190] Probably no bishop dwelt on almsgiving as much as Leo.[191] Out of his ninety-six sermons, forty include exhortations to charity,[192] the vast majority of which stress the reward that generosity brings. His first sermon for the November Collections, for instance, opens with the promise of the merit of almsgiving, that whoever aids the needy benefits his own soul, that those who feed Christ store up treasure in heaven.[193] The traditional Roman virtue of euergetism, which brought honour and influence to the donors and cemented society, is here baptised as the means of achieving a heavenly reward and uniting the Church. The Church itself became part of the process, distributing the money gathered through the collections and looking after the poor of the city.[194] This is civic Christianity in action, transforming rather than undermining the positive values of traditional society.

One of the starkest challenges that the Christian calendar posed to the old ways of the city was the call to fast in Lent and in the days following Pentecost, in September and December. Leo did not shirk the task of addressing this presumably unpopular obligation.

---

[186] *Tr* 95.   [187] Paschoud, *Roma Aeterna*, 319.

[188] Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire*, 147–59.   [189] Ibid. 179–88.

[190] Ibid. 171–3; 188–218.   [191] Armstrong, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 169–83.

[192] C. Lepelley, 'Saint Léon le Grand et la Cité Romaine,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 35 (1961), 130–50, esp. 134.

[193] *Tr* 6.1 (Nov. 440).

[194] See esp. *Tr* 11.2 (Nov. 445): everyone who seeks aid has recourse especially to the Church whose administrators (*praesides*) distribute the money raised in the collections.

Thirty-four of his surviving ninety-six sermons are devoted to the fasts. His presentation of the meaning of fasting is therefore of interest.[195] The fasts do not disrupt ordinary life—unlike the Jews who have barefoot processions and mournful faces, the Christian fast is simple frugality with no change in clothing and no interruption to daily work.[196] They have more to do with restraint and morality than hunger. His central, repeated contention is that there can be no Christian fast without the exercise of charity.[197] While fasting is both a penance and a discipline, promoting justice and temperance,[198] it leads to love of others grounded in common human nature and forgiveness grounded in common sinfulness, which is a sharing in the power of God.[199] As he links fasting with love, and especially almsgiving, Leo shows that it is not a practice of purely individual value. It is not only the person who fasts who makes restitution by penance and achieves moral purity; the whole of society is made more just and more virtuous by his or her generosity. Justice, however, does not challenge the class system. It is God's providence that there should be rich people to look after the poor and the poor give the rich their opportunity to be good[200] and however upright the rich might be, without almsgiving they have no true virtue.[201] Thus while touching on the central Christian virtues of love, mercy, purity and finding in them the means of recreating the divine image in man, Leo is always offering a morality that is useful, a doctrine that makes sense to his audience in terms of the needs of his society.

[195]   Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity* 153–68.   [196]   *Tr* 89.1 (Sept. 444)

[197]   A. Guillaume, *Jeûne et charité dans l'Église latine, des origins au XIIe siècle en particulier chez saint Léon le Grand* (Paris, 1954), 51–135; R. Dolle, 'Un docteur de l'aumône, saint Léon le Grand,' *La Vie Spirituelle*, 96 (1957), 266–87, and 'Les idées morales de saint Léon le Grand,' *Mélanges de Science Religieuse*, 15 (1958), 49–84, esp. 61–70, 74–7; Chrysostom also saw almsgiving as the antidote to the dangers of wealth, Hartney, *John Chrysostom*, 171–81.

[198]   E.g. *Tr* 50.2 (9 Mar. 458).

[199]   Ibid. 3: *Iusta prorsus et benigna conditio, qua diuinae potentiae fit particeps homo, ut sententiam Dei ex suo libret arbitrio, et eo sibi iudicio obstringat quo iudicauerit ipse conseruum. Siue itaque circa aequales, siue circa subiectos, naturae parilitas diligatur, et quia nemo non peccat, nemo non parcat, non difficulter praestemus quod gratulanter accepimus, ut siue in largitate elemosinarum, siue in indulgentia peccatorum, quanto magis fuerimus misericordes, tanto simus perfectius innocentes.*

[200]   *Tr* 89.6 (Sept. 444) *Mirabiliter autem prouidentia diuina disposuit ut essent in Ecclesia et sancti pauperes et diuites boni, qui inuicem sibi ex ipsa diuersitate prodessent.*

[201]   *Tr* 10.1–2 (Nov. 444).

The Church

Leo addressed a Christian community which was effectively coterminous with the population of the city. There is no sense of the Church as the embattled minority, little sense even of outsiders yet to be converted. Yet he knew his flock was a mixture of saints and sinners. The moral exhortations found in the majority of his sermons indicate as much; so too the penitential structures of reconciliation in the Church.[202] Furthermore, thousands of people almost certainly failed to follow the weekly liturgical rituals owing to the inadequacy of the provision of churches. In daily experience, Leo faced the puzzling relationship between the universality of God's will to save humanity and its limited effect in practice. What then was the Church and how could Leo afford such a confident view of its work in such a vast city?

Leo distinguished two births of the Church.[203] The first was in Christ's Nativity, the second at Pentecost. The first was an inauguration of salvation for all humanity, the second the fruition of salvation in the Body of Christ. By making this distinction, Leo provided himself with a way of describing the difference between the universal salvific will of Christ and its application in creating the Body of Christ. It also allowed for a distinction between the people of God journeying to salvation and the Body of Christ enjoying its fruits.

At Christmas and Epiphany, he could dwell on Christ's solidarity with all humanity and the call to all the nations. The Nativity and the Epiphany offer salvation to all humanity. For instance, in his first Epiphany sermon, he declared:[204]

It concerns the salvation of all men that the infancy of the Mediator between God and men (1 Tim 2.5) was now declared to the whole world since hitherto it had been confined to this small village. For although he had chosen the Israelite nation and one family of this nation from which he assumed the nature of universal humanity, he did not want the beginnings of his appearing to be hidden within the narrowness of his mother's dwelling but he who deigned to be born for all wanted soon to be known by all.

---

[202] P. Riga, 'Penance in St Leo the Great,' *Église et Théologie*, 5 (1974), 5–32.

[203] G. Hudon, *La perfection chrétienne d'après les sermons de saint Léon* (Paris, 1959), 55–74; *G. Hudon*, 'L'Église dans la pensée de saint Léon,' *Église et Théologie*, 14 (1983), 305–36, esp. 310–25.

[204] *Tr* 31.1 (6 Jan. 441).

The quotation from 1 Tim 2.5 in this context, the verse following the *locus classicus* of God's will for universal salvation (God desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth: 1 Tim 2.4), is no accident. Leo's Mediator, unlike Augustine's, offers salvation to all. Leo offers a variety of ways of understanding this: the overthrowing of the Devil's power, the restoration of the image in man, union of the divine nature with human nature, the bringing to birth of the Christian people, the restoration of peace. His Christmas sermon for 441[205] speaks of nature purged from its ancient disease and restored to its honour; death is destroyed in death, birth restored in the birth. At Christmas two years later,[206] he said that the Lord had given much to human origins, making us in his own image, and far more to our restoration, accommodating himself to the form of a servant. Interestingly and perhaps revealing some influence from Irenaeus, he then went on to say that, having been made in the image and likeness of God, had man cultivated the dignity of his nature his uncorrupted mind would have led his earthly body to celestial glory. His Epiphany sermon of 444[207] stated that the *essentia* (a word coined by Augustine to describe the divine nature) of incorporeal light offered purification to the creature that he had made in his own image by becoming united (*sociando*) with him. These ideas reached lapidary form in the Christmas sermon of 450: the generation of Christ is the origin of the Christian people and the birth of the head is the birth of the body;[208] the birth of the Lord is the birth of peace.[209]

While in principle the nativity has offered salvation to all humanity, the need to appropriate that salvation is outlined in the sermons for the Lenten and other fasts and for the Collections. Here he stressed the need to imitate the creator in whose image men are made and thereby restore the image by love. Leo uses the ideas of common human nature made in the image of God and the restoration of the image in love to combine a universal call and particular transformations. While in sermon for the September fast of 443,[210] he said that the communion of nature is to be loved in all men, two years later[211] he insisted that the brightness of our minds, created in the image and likeness of God, needs polishing, the mirror of our heart needs

---

[205] *Tr* 22.4.   [206] *Tr* 24.2 (25 Dec. 443).   [207] *Tr* 34.4.   [208] *Tr* 26.2.
[209] *Tr* 26.5.   [210] *Tr* 41.3 (21 Feb. 443).   [211] *Tr* 43.3 (25 Feb. 445).

cleaning—a theme he returned to in his sermon on the Beatitudes,[212] and in the Lent of 457.[213] The sermon for the September fast of 445[214] took a strikingly Augustinian theme—there are two loves and two wills, and those who bear the image of God should do his will. He repeatedly used the idea that everyone is made in God's image as a way of calling his congregation to rediscover that image in themselves: in the Lent of 452[215] and the September fast of 454,[216] he cried out for mercy to those made in the image of God, mercy which is itself the imitation of the one in whose image and likeness we are made. In the Lent of 455,[217] he said that where God finds merciful care, he finds the image of his own kindness. The most complete expression of these ideas is in his sermon for the December fast of 450, which says that the image formed at the beginning is reformed daily[218] by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.[219] The sermons for the fasts and the collections are about the re-drawing of the image of God in his congregation, the appropriation now of the salvation offered to all individual souls. This theme is reinforced in the sermons for Holy Week, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost where he tracked the way of obedience and humility followed by Christ and now followed by his body, the Church.

This allocation of one set of ideas to Christmas and Epiphany, another to the fasts and another to the Paschal cycle allows Leo to insist that God wills the salvation of all men and yet that that salvation must be appropriated by each one, that Christ's death and resurrection is the supreme saving mystery yet it fulfils the mission begun in the Nativity, that Christ unites himself with all humanity in his birth yet it is only those filled with the Spirit who will be saved. These ideas are not necessarily contradictory but this method of distributing them throughout the year saves Leo from the very difficult task of achieving a coherent account of how they can be reconciled.

Leo thus tends to differentiate between the people of God, *populus Dei* or *populus Christianus*, and the *Ecclesia* which is the Body of Christ. Usually, but not invariably, when talking about the community of believers born with Christ at Christmas and remade in his

---

[212] *Tr* 95.7 (446–61?). [213] *Tr* 49.4 (17 Feb. 457).
[214] *Tr* 90.3 (Sept. 445). [215] *Tr* 45.2 (10 Feb. 452). [216] *Tr* 92.1.
[217] *Tr* 48.5 (13 Mar. 455). [218] *Tr* 12.1 (17 Dec. 450). [219] *Tr* 12.4.

image in the fasts, he talks of the people of God. The Church as the Body of Christ,[220] by contrast, comes into existence at Pentecost.[221] The Church is the Body of Christ[222] and so Christ is present in the assembly.[223] He explains this in the two sermons for the Ascension that survive. In 444, he proclaimed that Christ's Ascension is our elevation and the glory of the head is the hope of the body.[224] In principle, the whole Body has thus ascended in Christ. The following year, he turned the idea around. The Ascension allows Christ to be present in the Church now more fully than he was in his mortal life.[225] This is because what was visible in the Redeemer has now passed over into *sacramenta*, saving mysteries.[226] Physical limitations have been transcended[227] and so the Ascension is not a feast commemorating the departure of Christ but rather his presence in a new and more powerful way in the Church.

The feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost are thus very closely linked in Leo's theology. Christ's new mode of presence is achieved by the Holy Spirit. He applies Paul's description of the individual believer's body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6.19) to the Church,[228] and thus can speak confidently that there is no holiness outside the Church, the Temple of the Spirit, and the Body of

---

[220] Hudon, *La perfection chrétienne*, 75–90; 'L'Église,' 318–28; M. Garrido Bonaño, 'Prolongacion de Cristo en su Cuerpo Mistico, segun San Leon Magno,' *Studium*, 15 (1975), 491–505.

[221] This is suggested repeatedly in Pentecost sermons: *Tr* 78.1 (2 May 441?); 75.5 (23 May 443); 76.8 (2 Jun. 444).

[222] A very common image: e.g. 82.7 (29 Jun. 441); 25.5 (25 Dec. 444); 46.3 (1 Mar. 453).

[223] E.g. 2.2 (29 Sept. 441).

[224] *Tr* 73.4: *Christi ascensio, nostra prouectio est, et quo praecessit gloria capitis, eo spes uocatur et corporis.*

[225] *Tr* 74.4 (17 May 445): *Tunc igitur, dilectissimi, filius hominis Dei Filius excellentius sacratiusque innotuit, cum in paternae maiestatis gloriam se recepit et ineffabili modo coepit esse Diuinitate praesentior, qui factus est humanitate longinquior.*

[226] *Tr* 74.2: *Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transiuit, et ut fides excellentior esset ac firmior, uisioni doctrina successit, cuius auctoritatem supernis inluminata radiis credentium corda sequerentur.*

[227] *Tr* 74.3: *Totam enim contemplationem animi in Diuinitatem ad Patris dexteram consedentis erexerant, nec iam corporeae uisionis tardabantur obiectu, quominus in id aciem mentis intenderent, quod nec a Patre descendendo afuerat, nec a discipulis ascendendo discesserat.*

[228] *Tr* 78.3 (2 May 441?).

Christ.[229] It is here that Leo finds his way towards some explanation of the Trinitarian economy of all things, the related activity of Father, Son, and Spirit, one in mercy, justice, action, and will.[230] Leo's thinking is clearly grounded in Pauline and Lukan teaching on the community built up by the Spirit in union with the risen Christ, its continuity with the work of Christ, and the life of the community in love, reconciliation, and almsgiving. A favourite text that he quotes often is 1 Peter 2.9, telling his congregation that they are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart. Significantly, he quotes it at Christmas,[231] but also at the anniversary of his ordination as bishop and the feast of saints Peter and Paul[232] when the ministerial function of apostles, bishops, or clergy is set within the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ as a whole. In fact, it is Christ who remains the pastor of his flock[233] and each action of the Church or its ministers is the action of Christ.[234] The ministers of the Church are thus secondary to Christ and share in his pastoral work.[235]

None of this seems very remarkable, but Leo's whole theological project is based on a further important and distinctive idea. Union with Christ in the Church is achieved by sharing the saving actions of his life. All the actions of Christ's life, from the Incarnation to the Ascension, were salvific.[236] They are *sacramenta*. Above all, the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery are one.[237] This stress on the life that Christ lived as one saving act of love, restoring justice by overturning the power of the Devil, a life of humility and obedience reversing the sin of Adam, leads to its liturgical celebration in the annual round of feasts and fasts of the Church. Each year,

[229] *Tr* 69.5 (4 Apr. 454), cf. also 79.2 (31 May 453).
[230] *Tr* 77.1 (31 May 442?), 76.3 (2 Jun. 444).
[231] *Tr* 24.6 (25 Dec. 443), 26.3 (25 Dec. 450).
[232] *Tr* 82.1 (29 Jun. 441), 3.1 (29 Sept. 443), 4.1 (29 Sept. 444).
[233] *Tr* 30.5 (25 Dec. 454).   [234] *Tr* 63.6 (19 Mar. 452).
[235] *Tr* 3.2 (29 Sept. 443); 5.2–4 (29 Sept., after 445?).
[236] Stated with varying degrees of clarity in *Tr* 22.4 (25 Dec. 441); 54.4 (5 Apr. 442); 74.1 (17 May 445); 36.1 (6 Jan. 451); the neatest statement is in 66.4 (10 Apr. 453): *Nihil enim non ad nostram salutem aut egit aut pertulit, ut uirtus quae inerat capiti inesset et corpori.*
[237] *Tr* 21.2 (25 Dec. 440); 23.2 (25 Dec. 442); 28.6 (25 Dec. 452); 48.1 (13 Mar. 455). This is the main burden of the laborious but insightful J.-P. Jossua, *Le Salut: incarnation ou mystère pascal chez les pères de l'Église de saint Irénée à saint Léon le Grand* (Paris, 1968).

the Christian community follows the cycle of the saving mysteries by re-living them in the liturgy.[238] The historical events of Christ's life, death, and resurrection are made present again and effective in their liturgical commemoration. Thus he opens his first Christmas sermon: *Saluator noster, dilectissimi, hodie natus est, gaudeamus.*[239] He states the ideal more fully a year later: *Reparatur enim nobis salutis nostrae annua reuolutione sacramentum, ab initio promissum, in fine redditum, sine fine mansurum.*[240] He gave it its fullest expression in his Christmas sermon for 450.[241] Key words punctuate his sermons: *hodie*, *memoriam celebrare*, *praesens*, *renouare*, *reparare*, *mysterium*, *sacramentum*, *exemplum*.[242] The *sacramenta* lay down paradigms of Christian behaviour, by which believers can be conformed to the actions of Christ, which he calls *exempla*. The saving benefits of the mysteries can only be appropriated by faith,[243] which is a response to scripture and preaching.[244]

Three levels of divine action are thus brought together: God's eternal plan of salvation, its realization in history and supremely in the life of Christ, and its actualisation in the liturgical life of the Church.[245] Again, this was a way of addressing the relationship between providence and history, between the will of God to save all mankind and its achievement among the people of the city of Rome in the middle years of the fifth century, between salvation won and salvation yet to be gained. It gave supreme importance to living the life of the Church to people who had only a generation before forsaken the public observance of a pagan calendar for a Christian one, who had learned a new sacred topography of their city, who were learning to accept a new history of ancient Rome.

[238] G. Rieux, 'Le Temps de salut chez saint Léon,' *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 94 (1993), 95–111.

[239] *Tr* 21.1 (25 Dec. 440).   [240] *Tr* 22.1 (25 Dec. 441).   [241] *Tr* 26.1–2.

[242] De Soos, *Le mystère liturgique*, 22–98; for a brief summary, Garrido Bonaño, 'Prolongacion de Cristo,' 497–500.

[243] Hudon, *La perfection chrétienne*, 86–90.

[244] Rieux, 'Le temps de salut,' 100–2.

[245] G. Hudon, 'Les présupposés "sacramentels" de saint Léon le Grand,' *Église et Théologie*, 10 (1979), 323–41, esp. 327–37.

Conclusion

Leo was the first major theologian to attempt to develop a doctrine of salvation for the changed circumstances of a Christianised Empire. Where many of his contemporaries attempted to assimilate the laity to monastic ideals and aspirations, Leo devised a version of Christianity for the baptised citizen. He followed Ambrose in absorbing the virtues and duties of Roman civic life into the Gospel message, first for the leaders of the Church and then for the people. He was thus unable to follow his master, Augustine, in the logic of insisting that God did not want to save all mankind. Christianity had to be a faith for all, open to all, and demanding upon all. Leo thus took a view of the Church that fitted well, perhaps too well, with the assumptions and structures of society both within Rome and throughout the Empire. The greatest requirement for the Christian community was to create a society of love based on almsgiving arising from the practice of regular public fasts, and even this was the Christianisation of the old practice of euergetism. As he preached to a city that had now effectively accepted the practice of Christianity, he offered a view of the Church where Christ had won salvation for all by accepting human nature but where people had to accept that salvation by following the annual cycle of the Church's commemoration of the saving events of his life and conforming themselves to the patterns that his life laid down.

4

The First Cycle of Sermons, 440–1

Introduction

On the very day of his ordination, Leo embarked on a series of sermons that would lead his congregation through the cycle of the liturgical year. Here we can see how far Leo had come as a theologian since the Nestorian crisis of a decade before. Although liturgical sermons, preaching on the feast or season rather than directly on scripture, had already become usual in Italy from the time of Ambrose, developing a theological scheme by preaching consistently throughout the year was new. Leo's decision to preach a coherent scheme of sermons each year was important: it expressed not only his conviction that salvation was appropriated through participation in the life of the Church but also that the life of Christ in its entirety was salvific.

Leo had enjoyed a long apprenticeship when he was elected pope in 440. Already in 418, he was an ally of the man he was eventually to succeed to the Throne of Peter. The crisis in relations with North Africa provoked by Zosimus was his introduction to the complexities of the Pelagian dispute; the schism that followed Zosimus' death was a bitter lesson in the need for unity in the Church. By 430, he was archdeacon, arranging Cassian's theological intervention in the Nestorian dispute. In 431, Cyril of Alexandria sought his support against the ecclesiastical pretensions of Juvenal of Jerusalem.[1] In 439, he persuaded Pope Sixtus not to lift the ban of excommunication from Julian of Eclanum.[2] In 440, he was dispatched to Gaul

---

[1] Leo, *Ep* 119.4.

[2] Prosper, *Chronicon*, sa 439, *MGH*, *Chron min*, vol 1, 477.

to negotiate between Aetius,[3] the Magister Utriusque Militum, and Albinus,[4] the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, in a mission of the utmost sensitivity.[5] His election as Pope during his absence seemed a foregone conclusion.

By 440, he had already laid down the main lines of his soteriology. He had learned a great deal from the last stage of the Pelagian controversy and from the Nestorian crisis, in both of which he played a subordinate part. He emerged from the Pelagian dispute convinced, unlike Augustine, that God wanted the salvation of all mankind. This view was dictated at least in part by the evangelical imperatives of converting the city to Christianity. He saw Christianity as the natural faith of the ordinary citizen, not at odds with civic virtue but fulfilling it. At the same time, he was clear that people must be saved from inherited original sin and that this was entirely God's work, though how in that case there could be people who were not saved, the conundrum that pushed Augustine towards the view that God did not in fact call all to salvation, was left unexplained.

Leo emerged from the Nestorian controversy deeply wary of any Christology that could not account for both the divine and human in Christ. Following Cyril's advice to the Apostolic See and Cassian's monograph that he had commissioned, he saw Nestorius' most profound error as effectively the denial of Christ's divinity. In Cyril he saw the champion of orthodoxy, that the Saviour must be both God and man, and found in the Reunion Formula of 433 the most concise expression of Cyril's position. He was aware of some of the limitations of Cassian's *De Incarnatione* but it probably introduced him to the *Libellus* of Leporius and therefore to the Christology of Augustine, where he found a doctrine that corresponded with Cyril's as he read him in the light of the Formula of Reunion. By 440, it is likely that Leo was quite well read in Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine and had evolved a soteriology built on the fact that Christ was one subject, both God and man, united in action through two distinct natures. The first cycle of sermons was built on these two ideas: civic Christianity as a response to God's universal salvific will and salvation won by Christ working in his two natures.

---

[3] Martindale, *Pros* 2, 21–9.   [4] Ibid. 53.

[5] Prosper, *Chronicon*, sa 440, cf. Mathieson, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 108.

The Structure of the Cycle

Leo developed a coherent theological outlook from the first year of his pontificate. This can be illustrated by a reading of the sermons that he preached in his first year in office, between 29 September 440 and the September of 441. By going through the sermons in the order in which his congregation originally heard them, his message becomes clearer. The shape of the year is determined by the interplay between ecclesiological and Christological themes: the great Christological sermons of Christmastide and the Paschal season are set against the sermons for the fasts which lay out his view of a Christianity that baptises civic virtue and calls the whole city to Christ. What unites the ecclesiological and Christological sermons is soteriology. The pattern of the year shows a soteriology in which salvation is offered to all and appropriated by the building up of a community of love, achieved by the union of God and man in the person of Christ, a union lived out in obedience and humility culminating in the glory of the Ascension and continued in the gift of the Spirit.

Leo inherited a liturgical year that had already been developed over several generations.[6] It had provided bishops in Italy from Zeno of Verona onwards with the essential material and structure of their preaching. Leo, however, was unique. First, he offered a coherent, effectively systematic Christology and ecclesiology, pulling the cycle of fasts and feasts together in a way none of his predecessors or contemporaries had attempted to do. Secondly, his method is rigorously Christological. Other preachers, notably Gaudentius of Brescia, root the great feasts in a more fundamental cosmological order.[7] The Annunciation and the Passover coincide with the vernal equinox because it expresses the perfect balance that has been lost to creation in the Fall as well as being the harbinger of summer. In other words, the work of Christ fits a deeper pattern, the created order of the universe, which it restores.[8] Leo shows no interest in the solstice and

---

[6] T. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1991).

[7] Gaudentius, *Tr* 1 says March is the month of creation, chosen by Christ to restore all things *in statum tranquilli primordii* before the heat of summer, the heat of judgment, *CSEL* 68, 18.

[8] A. Chupungco, *The Cosmic Elements of Christian Passover* (Rome, 1977), 27–47.

the equinox. His view of the great mysteries of Christ's life is not so much cosmological as historical. Christ's life is part of human history and it is in the historical present that it is actualised and appropriated.

Each year, Leo seems to have preached at least fifteen times. From this body of sermons about a dozen were selected for publication from each of the first five years of his pontificate. The first collection of sixty sermons was probably published soon after 445 and might have marked Leo's triumph over Manichaeism in Rome and over Hilary of Arles in Gaul.[9] A second collection, comprising a revision of ten sermons in the first collection and 32 new sermons, was published probably towards the end of Leo's life, probably in response to the crisis in Palestine provoked by the Council of Chalcedon and his Tome.[10] The fifteen occasions spread right across the year. He began with three sermons which laid down the ecclesial context of his teaching: at the end of September, the anniversary of his consecration; in November, the great collection for charitable relief in the city; in December, the fast in preparation for Christmas. Then his pair of sermons for Christmas Day and the Epiphany set out who Christ is and to whom his offer of salvation is made. The ecclesial theme returns with the Lent fast which recalls the Church to accept Christ's saving love in the shared life of the city. The Paschal mystery is placed at the heart of the saving work of Christ in sermons for Palm Sunday; the Wednesday of Holy Week; Good Friday; the Easter Vigil. The Ascension and Pentecost form another pair on the culmination of Christ's ministry and its continuation in the work of the Spirit. The regular cycle ends with a further call to the ecclesial experience of salvation in the September fast. A few sermons survive showing other occasions when Leo preached: a sermon on the Transfiguration preached on a Sunday in Lent in 445; a very short sermon for a weekday fast after Pentecost in 442(?); sermons for the feast of saints Peter and Paul in 441 and 443; the commemoration of the sack of Rome by Alaric in the August or September of 442; a sermon against Eutyches on Christmas Day 457; and sermons on the martyrdom of the Maccabees and for the feast of St Lawrence preached at some point between 446–61. Whether these were the only occasions on

---

[9] Chavasse, *CC* 138, CXC111.   [10] Ibid. CXCV–CCI.

which the pope regularly preached simply cannot be known. It is possible that they represent a stage in the early development of the stational liturgy, by which the pope celebrated the major liturgical days in different stational churches around the city as a way of uniting the people of this uniquely big western city around their bishop.[11]

Typically, a core of ten of these occasions was included in every year's selection. To these a few more were added to make up each year's cycle. The core body is the anniversary of his consecration, the November collection, the December fast, Christmas, the Epiphany, the Lent fast, Palm Sunday, the Wednesday of Holy Week, Pentecost and the September fast. These are all always included (with the exception, in 442, of the sermon on the anniversary of his consecration). What is at once evident is the importance given to the sermons for the November collections and the Ember days[12]—the fasts in December, Lent, and September. Why are these never omitted? Some of the early ones are Leo's briefest and least impressive sermons, little more than announcements and exhortations to fast and give alms. By the mid-440s, they have become longer and more elaborate but why were they all always reproduced, even the slightest early ones? Read singly, these early sermons for the fasts are insubstantial. Read in the context of the whole year, their real significance becomes clearer. One factor might be purely literary: just as the actual fasts prepared the people for the feasts, so the sermons for the fasts highlight the feasts for the reader. The alternation of fast and feast provides the variety needed to make the whole corpus of sermons more readable. The real reason, however, is theological: the meaning of the fasts, which apply the saving work celebrated in the feasts, becomes more obvious when the sermons are read together. The fasts explain how salvation is applied in the congregation while the feasts explain how salvation has been achieved by Christ. This shows that the intentions of the editor fully coincided with the intentions of the author; it suggests that Leo authorised the selection and publication of the sermons himself.

---

[11] N.W. James, 'Pope Leo the Great, the City of Rome and the Western Churches,' unpublished DPhil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1984, 73–6.

[12] G.G. Willis, *Essays in Early Roman Liturgy* (London, 1964), 49–97.

Table 4.1. The First Five Cycles of Sermons, 440–5

	440–1	441–2	442–3	443–4	444–5
Ordination	*	*		*	*
November collection	*	*	*	*	*
December fast	*	*	*	*	*
Christmas	*	*	*	*	*
Epiphany	*	*	*	*	*
Lent fast	*	*	*	*	
Transfiguration					*
Palm Sunday	*	*	*	*	*
Wednesday of Holy Week	*	*	*	*	*
Good Friday			*	*	
Holy Saturday vigil			*		
Ascension				*	*
Pentecost	*	*	*	*	*
Pentecost feria		*			
September fast	*	*	*	*	*
Peter and Paul	*		*		
Commemoration of 410		*			
Totals	11	12	12	12	12

The First Three Sermons, September to December 440: The Ecclesial Context of Theology

The first cycle of 440–1 is the shortest. Some of the sermons are brief; in later years they would be longer. There are only eleven sermons rather than the more usual annual selection of twelve. Yet, though Leo was still yet an apprentice preacher, his poise and accomplishment from the outset are immensely impressive. The autumn was devoted to three sermons which established the relationship of preacher and congregation and set his whole theological enterprise in the context of the Church. For the twin feasts of Christmas and Epiphany, he produced two major sermons on the identity of Christ and his call to all the nations. The Lent sermon pondered the community's response to the offer of salvation. The Holy Week sermons looked at the climax of Christ's saving work. Pentecost, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul and the Ember days of September were marked by sermons that again examined how salvation is appropriated in the Church.

Leo's first sermon (*Tr* 1), preached on the day of his consecration, 29 September 440, is short and very personal. Words of gratitude to God lead to a commitment to pastoral solicitude and a request for

the people's prayers. Despite its brevity, it is full of scriptural allusion and is clearly not extemporised. It reads like a preface to the sermons that follow, a statement of intent, establishing the relationship of preacher and congregation, author and reader. That they have chosen him is the more striking given his absence when Sixtus died: it is they who treated him as though he were present and it is they who have inaugurated their relationship with him as their bishop. He quotes the psalms, that most ecclesial and Christological of biblical books, five times in the first few sentences. Deftly, he links together their choice of him as bishop (*arbitrium*; *iudicium*) with the judgment that Christ will make of him (*in futuri retributione iudicii*) where they will be his joy and crown before the just Judge (*apud iustum Iudicem*). Older members of the congregation must have reflected on the contrast between the condition of the Roman Church in the autumn of 440 and the schism that erupted after the death of Zosimus in December 418. This would underlie Leo's repeated words of thanksgiving and his appreciation of the congregation's love and faith, as well as his prayer for common peace and the preservation of unanimity.[13] It is thus a sermon as much about them as about him; it is a strikingly ecclesial note on which to launch a preaching career.

The second sermon (*Tr* 6), preached on 6 November 440, is also brief, constituting a call to the people of Rome to be generous in a great collection for the poor. It balances the previous sermon, which concentrated on the relationship of the pastor and the congregation, by stressing the unity of the people as the body of Christ. Leo begins by addressing his congregation individually, in the singular when speaking of the duty of generosity, but then in the plural when urging them to serve Christ by showing love to the poor. He tells them as individuals that rich and poor are united in the design of the Creator, who has given some an abundance so that they can aid the needy. He reminds the congregation in the plural that they feed Christ when they feed the hungry. It is in this way that individuals become a community. Though the poor do not appear to be present in person—they are nowhere addressed but are spoken of as the recipients of the congregation's charity—the repeated emphasis on Christ's presence

---

[13] *Praestet in commune omnibus nobis pacis bonum, qui uobis studia unanimitatis infudit.*

in the poor indicates that in another way they are part of the body of Christ. This sermon, though so brief and banal it seems like a notice that somehow has been allowed to slip through the editor's blue pencil into the published text, is striking when juxtaposed with the meditation on the papal office that precedes it. Leo's high papalism is always balanced by this emphasis on the unity of the community in love. The sermon preached on the anniversary of his accession is always followed by the sermon for the November collection precisely to establish the character of the Church as united in the providence of the Creator and the love of Christ.

The next sermon (*Tr* 13), for the December fast delivered on 15 December 440, brings these themes together. Here we find Leo's first account of the kind of civic Christianity he wanted to foster and, though this is still a short sermon, we find here the distinctive notes of Leo's style. Fasting promotes chaste imaginings, rational wills, and sounder counsels, benefiting both flesh and spirit.[14] But it is not a private asceticism. It must be accompanied by almsgiving, which is a sacrifice of compassion to the Creator of all. Leo conjoins fasting and charity in characteristically balanced phrases: let us spend on virtue what we take away from luxury; let the abstinence of the faster become the refreshment of the poor (*Inpendamus uirtuti, quod subtrahimus uoluptati. Fiat refectio pauperis abstinentia ieiunantis*). Fasting is thus an ecclesial discipline. As he lists the people who must be helped by generosity—widows, orphans, mourners, rivals, strangers, oppressed, the naked, the sick—in a way that is reminiscent of the Beatitudes and Jesus' sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth, Leo is also spelling out the universal duty of charity within the Christian community and the city. At the same time, the list is reminiscent of the parable of the Last Judgment in Mt 25: there is a hint of an eschatological dimension to fasting and almsgiving. He tells the people that after the coming days of fast on Wednesday and Friday, they will keep vigil together with Peter on the Saturday (presumably meaning that the vigil will happen at Peter's tomb at the Vatican basilica).

---

[14] *Tr* 13: *De abstinentia denique prodeunt castae cogitationes, rationabiles uoluntates, salubriora consilia. Et per uoluntarias afflictiones caro concupiscentiis moritur, uirtutibus spiritus innouatur.* Though none of the terms here is uniquely Augustinian, the juxtaposition of *cogitationes* and *uoluntates* and *uoluntarias* and *concupiscentiis* suggests the influence of Augustine.

Gathering in vigil at a martyr's tomb is rich in eschatological resonance. The community is united under God, the author of all good things, in fasting and charity and in prayer with its first shepherd, Peter.

It is thus interesting that the starting point for Leo's systematic presentation of Christian belief is the community itself. He wants to establish both who the preacher is and who the audience is because the proclamation and celebration of the mystery of Christ are ecclesial. It is only after considering how Christ can be found in the Church that he turns more directly to the work of Christ himself, because the work of Christ is continued and effected in the Church. Christ is present in the Church, which is his body, but is also sought and awaited in vigil and expectation. This fundamentally sacramental soteriology will be explored more fully in the sermons for the rest of the year.

Christmas and Epiphany, 440–1: Incarnation and Salvation

After these short sermons, the longer tractate for Christmas Day (*Tr* 21) delivered ten days later is all the more prominent. Within three months of his election, Leo produced a precise doctrinal statement in stately, distinctive prose. So far, Leo had given no sign of his expertise as a theological or dogmatic teacher but here he offered a remarkably accomplished exposition of doctrine, richly supported by scriptural allusion.

Christmas had been celebrated in Rome on 25 December for well over a century; it is likely that the date was not chosen as a replacement for the *Natalis solis invicti* of the winter solstice, but rather by calculation backwards from the ancient calculation that Jesus had died on 25 March.[15] For a city, however, where the public observance of paganism had only been suppressed just before living memory, and where the private practice of pagan worship must have continued as a serious obstacle to the Christianisation of the city, a major papal sermon on Christmas Day was clearly an event of great evangelical significance. It is likely that some of the congregation entering the

---

[15] Talley, *The Origins*, 79–162.

basilica at the Vatican were seen venerating the rising of the new sun; Leo took the opportunity a year later to admonish the congregation strongly against the practice.[16] So here is Leo, the orator bishop, calling a still semi-pagan congregation to the Christian life which he depicts as not challenging but completing civic virtue. But what he delivers is a brilliant first essay in theology, a learned tractate, intended to state an authoritative position on the person and natures of Christ disputed nine years earlier at the Council of Ephesus. At the same time, it is a trumpet call to the city, proclaiming to them that Christianity is their common faith.

The opening words set the tone: *Saluator noster, dilectissimi, hodie natus est, gaudeamus*; our saviour, beloved, was born today; let us rejoice. *Hodie*, today: past event is made present. This is not simply a commemoration of saving events in history. The saving reality of Christ is accomplished today.[17] At the end of the sermon he resumes the theme of thanksgiving and describes the Church as united with Christ as his body and its members as made temples of the Holy Spirit in baptism. Christ and the Holy Spirit are thus depicted as present and active now in the Church. Thus Leo links a sacramental understanding of time with his ecclesial understanding of salvation. They are connected by the divine plan which, with allusions to Galatians and Ephesians, determines the fullness of time in which to act and which is revealed to the Virgin in the Annunciation.

This Christmas sermon was Leo's first venture in grand oratory; it was his first bid to be seen as the greatest orator in the city. It was his opportunity to lay out the claim that Christianity was the faith for the whole city and thus we find him firmly on the side of those who, in the late stage of the Pelagian controversy, had insisted that Christ's salvation was intended for and offered to all. At the outset, Leo proclaims:

No one is excluded from participation in this happiness; all have one common cause of joy, because as Our Lord, the destroyer of sin and death, finds no one free from guilt, so he comes to set all free. Let the saint exult because he nears the palm; let the sinner rejoice because he is invited to forgiveness; let the gentile be encouraged because he is called to life.[18]

---

[16] *Tr* 22.6 (25 Dec. 441).   [17] De Soos, *Le mystère liturgique*, 22–7.
[18] *Tr* 21.1.

The message is unmistakable: *nemo*, *cunctis*, *communis*, *noster*, *nullum*, *omnibus*, *sanctus*, *peccator*, *gentilis*: the words mount up as the litany of civic Christianity. Later in the sermon, Leo invites his congregation to look beyond the walls of Rome, describing the angels rejoicing as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built up out of all the nations of the world.[19] The Christmas message is for all. But what is the message?

Though this is a Christmas sermon and, in its first part, is rich in references to the nativity, it does not really single out the birth of Jesus as the great saving event. Leo's primary concern is to establish the saving identity of the child who is born rather than assess the saving effect of the birth itself. The child is the Son of God who takes the nature of all humanity to do battle with the Devil in the very nature where humanity had been defeated. The nature he took was human and sinless and so his mother Mary was a Virgin and the Mother of God. As God and man, Christ is the mediator, weakness mediating strength to a sinful world and building up his body, the Church.

The Son of God, in the fullness of time (cf Gal 4.4) which the inscrutable depth of the divine plan (cf Eph 1.10) has determined, has assumed human nature (*naturam generis adsumpsit humani*), to reconcile it to its author so that the inventor of death, the Devil, (cf Wis 2.24) might be conquered through that nature which he had conquered.[20]

The agent in the incarnation is the Son of God and the nature he assumes is the nature of the human race. Here, the twin theological lessons of the previous twenty years are rehearsed: the Nestorian controversy made Leo unambiguous in insisting that the actor in the incarnation and therefore the ultimate identity of Christ is the divine Word; the Pelagian controversy had taught him that the purpose of the incarnation was to offer salvation to all humanity, the whole human race. The two ideas are united in one sentence: the Son of God has taken the nature of the human race to reconcile it to the Father.

Leo probably found the idea of the assumption of universal human nature in Hilary of Poitiers. Hilary used almost exactly the same

---

[19] *Tr* 21.2: *Vident enim caelestem Hierusalem ex omnibus mundi gentibus fabricari.*
[20] *Tr* 21.1.

words to gloss 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'[21] Hilary repeatedly described salvation as solidarity in Christ and through Christ solidarity with the Trinity. In one striking passage, he likened the human nature assumed by Christ to a city made up of many inhabitants.[22] The incarnation establishes a society between the Son of God and the whole human race,[23] and the one human nature assumed by the Son therefore has a real union with the one nature of the Trinity.[24] The solidarity of the congregation—saints, sinners, and pagans—is thus established in the one human nature shared with Christ.

Leo does not use here the Augustinian idea of the consubstantiality of Christ with humanity, found also in the Formula of Reunion of 433, presumably because he wants to describe more than Christ's solidarity with mankind—he wants to sketch out a view of salvation as the triumph of God in human nature and therefore in principle a triumph for all humanity. By being assumed by the Son of God, the nature of all humanity can be reconciled with its Creator, but the assumption of humanity is the beginning of a battle in which the Devil is defeated in the common humanity which had formerly fallen to him, a battle of justice fought in wonderful equity, as the Almighty Lord engaged the enemy not in majesty but in humility, opposing to him the same form and the same nature, participating in death but not in sin.[25] The birth is the start of the struggle, *conflictu initu*, where the Son of God engages, *congreditur*, with the Devil. Christ's whole life has salvific value because the whole of his life is the struggle of sinless humility against the utter savagery of evil, the *saeuissimo hoste*. Leo can thus insist both that the Son of God achieved salvation by assuming the humanity common to the whole human race, apart from sin, and at the same time that salvation was won by the whole

---

[21] *Tractatus in psalmum* 51.17: *naturam scilicet in se totius humani generis adsumens*, CSEL 22, 109.

[22] *Commentarium in Matthaeum* 4.12: *Civitatem carnem quam assumpserat noncupat: quia ut civitas ex varietate ac multitudine consistit habitantium; ita in eo, per naturam suscepti corporis, quaedam universi generis humani congregatio continetur. Atque ita et ille ex nostra in se congregatione fit civitas, et nos per consortium carnis suae sumus civitatis habitatio*, PL 9.935.

[23] *De Trinitate* 2.24, CC 62, 60.   [24] Ibid. 8.13, CC 62A, 325–6.

[25] *Tr* 21.1.

life lived in the human nature. As he celebrates Christ's birth, he looks ahead to the struggle of Christ's life.

It is vital therefore that the battle be fought in the humanity shared by all but at the same time that Christ's humanity should be sinless. The triumph of justice is to be the triumph of sinless suffering. Leo thus needs to show how the Son of God could assume the nature of the human race without also taking on sin. Leo's solution is to link the two dogmatic achievements of his youth: the title of the Virgin, *Dei genetrix*, acknowledged at Ephesus in 431, and the nature of original sin as inherited guilt and concupiscence. If all humanity inherits original sin, then how was Christ spared? The answer is his virginal conception, which excluded all carnal passion and excused him from the law of sin:

What we read with regard to all is alien to this birth, "No one is clean from stain, not even an infant, whose life on earth is but one day old." (Job 14.4) And thus nothing passed from concupiscence of the flesh or flowed from the law of sin into this unique birth. A royal virgin of David's stock is chosen to be impregnated with the sacred seed and to conceive the divine and human offspring, first in mind and then in body.[26]

This is strikingly similar to a passage where Hilary asserts that Christ was fully human but that he was free from sin as he was not born under the defects of human conception,[27] but the detailed wording owes more to Augustine. Leo has clearly learned a good deal from his study of Augustine's contribution to the Pelagian controversy. Three typical ideas are linked: that all humanity has inherited original sin from Adam, that the means of transmitting original sin is the concupiscence inevitable in the sexual act, that Christ is exempt from the transmission of Adam's sin by the virginal conception of Mary. Leo establishes the first point, the concept of innate guilt, by citing a Latin translation of the Septuagint of Job which differs from the Vulgate. He is following Augustine closely, who frequently relies on this translation of the text in his anti-Pelagian writings.[28] It is

---

[26] *Tr* 21.1.   [27] *De Trin* 10.25, CC 62A, 479–81.

[28] *Nemo mundus a sorde, nec infans cuius unius diei si sit vita eius super terram* (Job 14.4): *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione et de Baptismo Parvulorum* 1.34, *CSEL* 60, 65, 3.13, *CSEL* 60, 150, *De Perfectione Iustitiae Hominis* 11.23, *CSEL* 42, 24, 11.28, *CSEL* 42, 26–7, *De Gratia Christi et de Peccato Originali* 37.40, *CSEL* 42, 155, *De*

striking that on the one other occasion that Leo uses the text, in his sermon for Christmas 452 (*Tr* 28.3) he quotes it in the Vulgate translation with its quite different sense. He implicitly accepts the further Augustinian commonplace that original sin is transmitted by the concupiscence of sexual generation, using the Augustinian word *concupiscentia*, and follows both Hilary and Augustine again in explicitly asserting that it is on account of the virginity of the conception that Christ does not inherit original sin.[29] Mary's double conception, in mind and body, is also a commonplace in Augustine, excluding all concupiscence from this singular event.[30] That Christ receives purity from the Virgin and preserves it is a common theme in Leo's sermons.[31]

Leo now advances to the central question: how are the two natures united in Christ? Describing what is revealed to the Virgin in the Annunciation, Leo sums it up saying that she is to be *Dei genetrix*, the decisive title settled at the Council of Ephesus of 431, which encapsulated the union of the two natures. This receives fuller expression a little later in the sermon:

The Word of God, therefore, God the Son of God, who 'in the beginning was with God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was nothing made,' (cf Jn 1.1–3) became man for the sake of freeing man from eternal death, so bending down to take on himself our humility without diminution of his majesty that, remaining what he was and assuming what he was not, he might unite the true form of a slave to that form in which he is equal to God the Father, (cf Phil 2.6–7) and join both natures together by such a union (*foedus*) that the glorification should not consume the lower nor the assumption lessen the higher. The property of each substance therefore having been preserved and come together in one person (*salva igitur proprietate utriusque substantiae et in unam coeunte personam*), majesty took on humility, strength weakness, eternity mortality; in order to pay the debt of our condition, inviolable nature was joined (*infusa*) with passible nature and true God and true man were joined (*temperatur*) into the unity of the Lord,

Nuptiis et Concupiscentia 2.50, *CSEL* 42, 305–7, *Contra Duas Epistolas Pelagianorum* 4.4.27, *CSEL* 60, 527–8.

[29] *De Trinitate* 13.18.23, *CC* 50A, 413–14; *De Genesi ad Litteram* 10.18.32, *CSEL* 28/1, 320.

[30] H. Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol 1 (London, 1963), 95–6.

[31] M. Armitage, 'A Marian Theme in the Soteriology of St Leo the Great,' *Marianum*, 55 (1993), 251–8.

so that, as suited our remedies, one and the same Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (cf 1 Tim 2.5) was able to die from one and rise from the other.[32]

This is a distinctively doctrinal passage, couched in technical language, which could not be intended simply for the edification of his hearers on Christmas Day 440 but must have been composed with a further audience in mind. It was quoted in large part by Leo in the Tome, but here serves to offer an account of salvation rooted in the Christological settlement after Ephesus. It brings together the three Christological texts most important for Leo and before him for Augustine: the Prologue of John's Gospel, the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2, and the description of the man Christ Jesus as the mediator between God and man from 1 Timothy. What Leo has achieved in this paragraph is therefore very interesting. First, he has repeated that the single agent in the incarnation and ultimate identity of Christ is the divine Word, but he has acknowledged that the union of the two natures in the incarnation forms a person who acts as mediator between God and mankind. It is noteworthy that there is a shift of subject in this passage: the Word is the subject of the act of incarnation and the principle of the unity of the two natures; the Mediator is the one who dies and rises with a power derived from the two natures.

Secondly, his account of kenosis does not imperil the divinity; rather the duality of natures explains how the divine is translated into a human life. The union is an act of divine humility and therefore instead of there being an irreconcilable tension between majesty and humility, strength and weakness, eternity and mortality, the human is an expression of the divine. The passibility of the human nature is an echo of the humility of the impassible divine nature. He has therefore given a meaning to mediation as the saving expression of divinity in humanity.

The distinctive phrase about remaining what he was and assuming what he was not can be found in several earlier sources including sermons of Augustine that Leo might have read.[33] The primary source

---

[32] *Tr* 21.2.
[33] For the references, see W. Bright, *Select Sermons of S. Leo the Great on the Incarnation*, 2nd edn. (London, 1886), 128 n. 4.

of the passage, however, appears to be the Formula of Reunion of 433.[34] Leo took this to be an authoritative summary of the common faith of Cyril and John of Antioch, a statement intended to eliminate the heresy of Nestorius rather than a confession forced out of Cyril to prove his orthodoxy to suspicious Syrians. Like this paragraph, the Reunion Formula also opened by asserting that the Incarnation took place for our salvation. It used the word *prosopon* to describe the union while Leo calls it a *persona*. Leo says that the properties of each nature come together in one person while the Formula says that a union of the two natures came about. The Formula is careful to preserve the distinction between the natures, calling it an unconfused union of two natures; Leo likewise stresses and elaborates that the property of each nature was preserved in the union. Thus the Formula allowed that some acts could be ascribed to the divinity and others to the humanity; Leo says that Christ was able to die from one and rise from the other. The Formula concedes the title Theotokos, which Leo uses in this passage. Here we can see the impact that the Reunion Formula made in Rome. It is reasonable to conclude that Leo's first considered essay in Christology is an anti-Nestorian statement thoroughly in tune with the agreed settlement of the most recent disputes in the East, disputes which had been watched closely from Rome.

If the emphases of this Christological statement of Leo's are determined by the recent controversies surrounding Ephesus, the content is largely drawn from the teaching of Hilary and Augustine already becoming canonised in the West. Given his definition of the nature taken by the Word as the humanity of the whole race, it seems likely that Leo was now familiar with Hilary's *De Trinitate*, which had established that one agent, the Word,[35] united two natures in the Incarnation,[36] true God and true man comprising two natures in his unity.[37] The Incarnation is a self-emptying by the Word, but not a surrender of his powers; he does not cease to be what he is.[38] In a similar passage in his commentary on Ps 138, Hilary insisted that the

---

[34] *ACO* I.1.4, 17.   [35] *De Trin* 10.22, *CC* 62A, 475–7.
[36] Ibid. 9.14, *CC* 62A, 385.   [37] Ibid. 9.3, *CC* 62A, 374.
[38] Ibid. 9.4, *CC* 62A, 374–5, 9.14, *CC* 62A, 385–6, 11.48, *CC* 62A, 576, 12.6, *CC*, 62A, 583.

Word remained in the form of God when he assumed the form of a servant.[39]

Hilary regularly uses the word *persona* to distinguish between the Father and Son or to insist that they are united as one substance or nature, not one person.[40] He scarcely ever applies the word to the union of the natures.[41] He does often cite 1 Tim 2.5, Christ the one Mediator, to stress the duality of natures in Christ.[42] Less often, he uses the text to offer a soteriological insight: as Mediator, Christ establishes communion between us and the Father;[43] having in himself what is of the flesh and obtaining in all things what is of God.[44] The use of the word *persona* for the union and the more fully developed sense of mediation thus owe more to Augustine than to Hilary. This passage is especially reminiscent of Augustine's *De Trinitate* 13.17.22,[45] where Augustine says that man has such a place in God's creation that human nature could be joined to God and that one person could be made out of two substances; humanity returns to God through a Mediator like this who assists humanity by his divinity and shares with them in their weakness, an example of obedience, conquering the Devil by the same rational creature that had been conquered by the Devil. Another possible source for the language of person and substances, also quoted by Leo in the Tome, was Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arianorum*, which in turn relies on Ambrose, especially *De Fide* and *De Incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento*.[46]

Leo is thus using Augustine to sharpen Christological concepts embedded in Hilary and using Hilary to soften Augustine's anti-Pelagian stand on predestination. The concept of the *persona Christi* is not unproblematic, however. The *persona* is simultaneously the Divine Word and the incarnate Christ, the union of the two natures.

---

[39] *Tract in Ps* 138.2, *CSEL* 22, 745–6.

[40] *De Trin* 3.23, *CC* 62, 95, 4.42, *CC* 62, 149, 5.10, *CC* 62, 160, 5.26, *CC* 62, 178, 7.39, *CC* 62, 307.

[41] *De Trin* 9.14, *CC* 62A, 385.

[42] Ibid. 4.8, *CC* 62, 107, 4.42, *CC* 62, 148, 9.3, *CC* 62A, 374, 10.25, *CC* 62A, 481.

[43] Ibid. 11.20, *CC* 62A, 551.   [44] Ibid. 11.40, *CC* 62A, 568.

[45] *CC* 50A, 412–13.

[46] B.E. Daley, 'The Giant's Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arianorum*,' *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (New York, 1993), 477–95.

Furthermore, it is difficult to describe this union as other than a composite of two separate realities. On this latter point, Leo is more careful than Augustine. It is striking that he does not follow Augustine's standard view that the point of union between the natures is the soul of Christ.[47] Writing after the condemnation of Apollinarianism[48] Augustine could give full weight to the significance of Christ's soul. Augustine was no doubt influenced by the Cappadocian teaching of the full humanity of Christ against Apollinaris, especially Gregory of Nazianzus's Letter, 101. He echoed its famous phrase, 'what is unassumed is unhealed' (*Ep* 101.7), on a number of occasions.[49] In that letter, Gregory's whole argument is soteriological: since Adam fell first in the soul, then Christ too must have a soul to save mankind fully (*Ep* 101.11). Though he does respond to the criticism that the Godhead and the soul could not coexist by claiming that it is the nature of intellectual substances that they can mingle with one another and also with bodies, incorporeally and invisibly (*Ep* 101.10), he did not regard the soul of Christ as a necessary intermediary between the Godhead and the body. He does not rule out as unworkable the view he attributes to Apollinaris that the divinity is linked directly with the flesh. His insistence that Christ had a soul is determined by soteriological, not psychological, concerns.

Augustine goes further than Gregory Nazianzen. He held the common view that the union of the two natures in Christ resembles the union of soul and body in a man,[50] but furthermore the union is mediated by the soul; it is less extraordinary that the soul should be united with the divine Word, both being immaterial and rational, than that the soul should be united with the body. He goes further: Christ's soul is not only the medium of the union, it is also a screen between the divine nature and the body and thus it played a part in his explanation of Christ's sinlessness. In his *De Fide et Symbolo*,[51] he claimed that it distanced the Word from the frailty of the human

---

[47] E. TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London, 1970), 149; B. Daley, 'Christology,' in A. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 165.

[48] Addressed in *De Diversis Quaestionibus* 80, *CC* 44A, 232–8.

[49] E.g. *De Fide et Symbolo* 4.8, *CSEL* 41, 11–12, *De Vera Religione* 16.30, *CC* 32, 205–6, *De Agone Christiano* 19.21, *CSEL* 41, 121–2.

[50] *Ep* 137.11, *CSEL* 44, 109–11.   [51] 4.10, *CSEL* 41, 14.

body, so that there was no danger of the Word being polluted by the birth from the Virgin. This is built on his view that original sin is transmitted to each newly created soul by contamination from the body with which it is conjoined, itself inheriting the sin from the concupiscence of the sexual act with which it was conceived.

Augustine's account of the soul as the medium of the union of natures in Christ opened the door to two dangers. The first was to see Christ as a composite of two distinct realities. Leo had plainly learned from the Nestorian controversy that that was a dangerous route to follow. It would undermine Christ's identity as the Word and turn the Word instead into one component in Christ. That would in turn lead to a very different soteriology with the two natures having a very different relationship with each other in Christ's saving acts. The second danger was to present the union as effected by grace. This was an idea Augustine was happy to entertain, but which was more problematic in the aftermath of the Nestorian controversy. Augustine was very clear that the divine will is one and unchangeable, to be identified with love and thus with the very nature of the Trinity.[52] Elsewhere in *De Trinitate*,[53] Augustine says that the Father and the Son are one not only in equality of substance but also that they are one in will, and that Jesus's prayer, 'That they may be one even as we are one' (Jn 17.22), means that his followers are to be one with the Mediator, with whom they are of the same nature, in a society of love *per eandem . . . concordissimam uoluntatem*. Salvation is thus a concordance of the will with the love of God. The missing step in the soteriological scheme is the concordance of divine and human wills in Christ. With that in place, he could have set up a soteriology in which the one will of the Trinity is united through the Word with a human will in Christ, which invites the wills of the rest of humanity to unite themselves with God in Christ in love.

Ever since he read Cassian, Leo must have been wary of any Christology built on grace or concordance of the will and thus he shrank from Augustine's distinctive emphasis on the soul of Christ as the point of union of the natures. This could explain an unusual move he makes a little later in the sermon. Instead of following Augustine's attempt in *De Trinitate*, 4.9.12 to show that salvation is the uniting

---

[52] *De Trin* 15.20.38, *CC* 50A, 515–16.   [53] Ibid. 4.9.12, *CC* 50, 177–8.

in love of the wills of Christians with the common will that unites Father and Son in Christ the Mediator, Leo uses a text very seldom cited by Augustine, 2 Peter, 1.4,[54] according to which a Christian is a partaker (*consors*) of the divine nature (*Tr*, 21.3). Leo only uses this text twice. The best explanation of its appearance here then seems to be that it was an affirmation of the reality of the union of the natures in Christ at the level of Christ's identity as the Word and to build a version of soteriology on that. The twin moves can be seen as a reaction against any Pelagian–Nestorian Christology of the kind sketched out in Cassian's *De Incarnatione.*

The salvation Leo describes as becoming a partaker of the divine nature is related to a group of other images: becoming a new creation in Christ, members of the body of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit (*Tr* 21.3). The scriptural images are not randomly chosen: union with God the Father, the source of being in the Trinity, as partakers in the divine nature; union with the Son as members of his body; union with the Spirit as temples of his indwelling. A Christian is thus described as a new creation in Christ, the work of the creating Father who made man in the image and likeness of the Son and breathed life into him by the Spirit. The combination of images is thus trinitarian and ecclesial.

Another attempt to show how the Mediator is united with the Church he has brought into union with himself and thus with the Father and the Spirit is offered a little earlier. As true God he applies the *remedium* while since he is also true man he provides the *exemplum.*

Thus, dearly beloved, such a nativity was befitting 'Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Cor 1.24) by which he both corresponded to us in humanity and excelled us in divinity. For unless he were true God, he could not bring us healing, unless he were true man he could not provide the *exemplum.*[55]

---

[54] G. Bonner, 'Augustine's Concept of Deification,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 37 (1986), 369–86, argues that though Augustine very seldom uses the language of deification or quotes 2 Peter 1.4, his frequently used images of filiation carry effectively the same meaning. Significantly, in his entry, 'Deification, Divinization' in Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages*, 265–6, the texts he quotes where Augustine does employ words such as *deificare* or *participationem suae divinitatis* are drawn not from his works of systematic theology but from his popular sermons.

[55] *Tr* 21.2.

This description of Christ achieving salvation in his two natures illustrates the link between Christology and soteriology which Leo took from Augustine. This account of salvation depends upon Christ being one person in two natures. The Mediator acts in two ways: as God, he gives man blessing; as man, he reconciles humanity with God. As Leo does here, Augustine often associates the use of the word *exemplum* to describe the work of Christ in his humanity with the title of Mediator and divides the Mediator's work into healing as God and giving the *exemplum* as man.[56] But how exactly does this soteriological model work?

Exemplum does not mean example but rather pattern or model or paradigm. It appears to be drawn from the exegetical terminology of Hilary of Poitiers, who regularly used *exemplum* to translate the Greek *antitupos*.[57] It thus means that, in his human nature, Christ is the embodiment of perfect manhood; but it must also mean that Christ is the prototype, the pattern, to which we shall be conformed.[58] There are occasions when Augustine seems to use the word to mean an illustration; but these uses, referring the Trinitarian pattern in man, might be better translated model.[59] Augustine appears in these passages to be employing models to describe the Trinitarian image of God in man. In fact, Augustine explicitly links the word *exemplum* to the *imago Dei* in a number of places,[60] the most complex of which is an extensive discussion of the way the Word in the form of God provides an *exemplum* for the spirits and empties himself to assume the form of a slave to provide an *exemplum* for mankind, thereby

[56] *Enchiridion* 108, *CC* 46, 107–8, which resembles *De Trin* 13.17.22, *CC* 50A, 412–3; see also *De Trin* 4.13.16–7, *CC* 50, 181–4, where Christ is contrasted with the Devil who is the mediator to death.

[57] Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus Mysteriorum* 1.1, *CSEL* 65, 3, 1.8, *CSEL* 65, 10, 1.12, *CSEL* 65, 12, 2.14, *CSEL* 65, 37. These texts are discussed by J.-P. Brisson in his introduction to the *Traité des Mystères*, Sources Chrétiennes, 19b (Paris, 1967), 18–28, where he shows that Hilary uses a variety of words including sometimes *sacramentum*, *forma*, *figura*, or *imago* to translate *tupos*, meaning a prefiguring of something later coming into reality, but always uses *exemplum* to translate *antitupos*, meaning the perfect model.

[58] Guzie's understanding of *exemplum* in 'Exegetical and Sacramental Language in the Sermons of Leo the Great' supersedes that of de Soos, *Le mystère liturgique*, 93–8, who effectively sees it as the structured and communal response required by the *sacramentum*.

[59] *De Trin* 14.3.5, *CC* 50A, 426, 14.7.9, *CC* 50A, 433, 14.13.17, *CC* 50A, 445.

[60] Ibid. 8.4.7–8.5.7, *CC* 50, 275–7.

restoring the image in which humanity had been made.[61] Given that Leo's use of Hilary and Augustine is apparent in this sermon and that the apportioning of *remedium* to the divinity and *exemplum* to the humanity follows Augustine closely, the best reading of *exemplum* here is therefore that Christ establishes in his life the perfect pattern to which Christians can be conformed, being himself the image of God both in his divinity and in his humanity.

Here the Christological underpinning of the soteriology becomes apparent. The humanity of Christ has no independent existence apart from the divine Word; as the perfect image of what humanity should be, it is entirely the work of the Word. Furthermore, the restoration of the image in Christians is entirely the work of God. Thus Christ's true identity is the Word. Yet Christ has to be a real man to establish the pattern for the restoration of the image. Much of Leo's preaching as the year unfolded would be devoted to establishing just what the pattern laid down by Christ was.

In this sermon, Leo indicates immediately of what Christ is the prototype when he says that the angels exulting at his birth see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the peoples of the world. Christ is thus the *exemplum* of the Church, likened appropriately to a city or even a building. Leo, the Christian orator preaching civic Christianity, opened his first major sermon by encouraging the congregation to rejoice in all their variety at the salvation offered to all. He indicates here that Christ's great work of salvation is to restore the image lost in man through sin by building the Church. Thus his flock was ready to hear the brilliant concluding section of the sermon (*Tr* 21.3): an encomium of the Christian, who ought to acknowledge his dignity, and of the Church, the Body of Christ; a fitting ending to the first great piece of papal oratory delivered to the newly converted city.

Leo has clearly learned a great deal from Cassian, from Cyril, from Hilary, and from Augustine. From Cassian's constructive ideas, he has learned both the need to be cautious about accounts of the incarnation that speak of a union of grace; from Cassian's inadequacies, he has learned the need to get away from traditional terminology of the man united with God or the man assumed. From Cyril, and especially

---

[61] Ibid. 7.4.5, *CC* 50, 252–4.

the Cyril of the Reunion Formula, he has taken the importance of insisting that the identity of Christ and agent of the incarnation is the divine Word, but that the Christ is a union of divine and human where the duality of the natures must be recognised along with the oneness of the person. Those lessons were probably reinforced by a study of Hilary. From Augustine, he took a richer understanding of the great presiding idea of Christ the Mediator and the crucial concept of the *persona* of Christ. He also derived from him the language to describe Christ's sinlessness through the Virgin Birth. From Hilary, he took the idea of Christ adopting universal human nature as a way of expressing the universal salvific will of God. From Hilary and especially Augustine he derived a soteriological model that fitted Christ the Mediator, providing restoration as God and the pattern of restoration as man. By the Christmas of 440, therefore, Leo has not just demonstrated that he has read a great deal in the aftermath of the Pelagian and Nestorian controversies; he has also developed the outline of a soteriology rooted in a one-person, two-nature Christology.

The purpose of this first Christmas sermon is not to celebrate the birth of Christ but rather to find in that birth his identity as God and man. The incarnation is not simply the nativity but the fact that the Son of God has become a man and therefore it encompasses all the actions of Christ. The Church's celebrations will not stop now at Christmas. Leo gives a hint that we need to look ahead beyond the birth of Christ when he draws from the contrast and yet union of the two natures the observation that Christ was able to die by reason of one state and rise again by virtue of the other. He is indicating what is to come later in the year.

Another long tractate follows twelve days later, for the Epiphany (*Tr* 31). This feast had originated in the East as a celebration of the baptism of Christ and soon acquired associations with the nativity, the visit of the Magi and the marriage feast of Cana; in the West, it was seen as the feast of the manifestations but in Rome and North Africa it was kept as simply the feast of the visit of the Magi.[62] Though the feast cannot have had the same significance for the city as Christmas, Leo delivers a sermon which is a sequel to and continuation of the one he had delivered twelve days before.

---

[62] Talley, *The Origins*, 103–47.

The great achievement of the Christmas sermon was to propose a soteriology grounded in a one-person, two-natures Christology. He opens the Epiphany sermon by referring back to Christmas and quoting again 1 Timothy 2.5, that Christ is the Mediator between God and man, indicating that he is now to continue with that theme. He makes it clear that this is the sequel and second stage of the Christmas sermon. Now Christ is to be made known beyond the village of his birth and the race from which he had assumed the nature of universal humanity (*de qua naturam uniuersae humanitatis adsumeret*) to be acknowledged by all since he had been born for all (*Tr* 31.1). Leo is again underlining his insistence on the universal salvific will of God, referring to the universality of the human nature Christ had assumed and explaining that he needed to be manifested to all as he was born for all. Leo looks closely at the signs in the story—the star and the gifts—which point to and manifest the truth. Beyond them, the humanity is itself the sign and manifestation of the divinity.

Thus the Magi accomplish their desire and led by the same star come to the child, the Lord Jesus Christ. They adore in flesh the Word, in infancy Wisdom, in weakness strength and in the reality of a man the Lord of majesty and so as to manifest the *sacramentum* of their faith and understanding they confirm with gifts what they believe in their hearts. They offer incense to God, myrrh to a man, gold to a king, knowingly venerating the divine and human nature in unity, because what was proper to the natures [*substantiis*] was not divided in power.[63]

Again, we have the antitheses spelled out: the wise men worship the Word in flesh, wisdom in infancy, strength in weakness, the Lord of majesty in the reality of man. Again the union is asserted: the Magi's gifts show that they knowingly worshipped the divine and human nature in unity, because the proper characteristics of each substance are not separated from those of the other in power. The Magi are here set forth as the embodiment of faith. They acknowledge the identity of Christ as the Son of God, recognising that in the Christ two natures are united in one power. Again, the distinction is made between the identity which they worship, the Word, and the united action of Christ in two natures through which they perceive the Word.

[63] *Tr* 31.2.

One of the most striking features of this sermon is the charac-terisation of Herod. He is the embodiment of fear, duplicity, envy, anger, violence, cruelty (*Tr* 31.2–3). Ultimately, he is the embodiment of futility seeking a temporal kingdom and attempting to subvert the divine ordering of the dispensation of reality.[64] Herod is thus portrayed strikingly as a real personality, which in turn emphasises the historical reality of the story. Herod becomes even more vivid when addressed in a lengthy apostrophe (*Tr* 31.2). More so even than the birth, Leo presents the Epiphany as an historical event in which the congregation can now participate liturgically.

As a rhetorical device, this evocation of Herod allows Leo to con-trast him with a number of figures: the Magi, the Christian, and Christ. The contrast with the Magi is economically done. Where most of the terms used to describe Herod are to do with wildness and pointlessness, the Magi are associated above all with light and purpose. The light of the star converted their eyes and minds so that they realised that what was so exceptional could not be meaningless and from the sign they were given understanding (*Tr* 31.1). With their eyes focused upon the light, they were led by the splendour of grace to the light of the truth, thus they accomplish their desire and knowingly adore, revealing with gifts the *sacramentum* of their faith and understanding (*Tr* 31.2). This process of illumination is thus the working out of the unchangeable ordering of the dispensation of real-ity, the *incommutabilem dispositarum rerum ordinem* (*Tr* 31.2). This divine dispensation demands that Christ should not die in Bethlehem but in Jerusalem; Christ's death was not to be for Herod's time, for before that the Gospel had to be established, the Kingdom of God preached, illnesses cured and miracles performed (*Tr* 31.2). The child must grow up and lead a life for the salvation of humanity. Herod then is contrasted with Christ: his attempts to subvert God's will are futile for he who was born of his own will died by the power of his own choice.[65] The divine dispensation is thus fulfilled in freedom by Christ. The key words of the sermon are illumination and fulfilment. Herod is the opposite of both. The preaching and miracles that Christ

---

[64] *O caeca stultae aemulationis impietas, quae perturbandum putas diuinum tuo furore consilium! Dominus mundi temporale non quaerit regnum, qui praestat aeternum* (*Tr* 31.2).

[65] *Qui uoluntate natus est, arbitrii sui 'potestate'* (John 10.17–8) *morietur.*

must yet perform are clearly the fulfilment of the divine plan for the purpose of fuller enlightenment.

The impression is thus one of widening circles—Christ's family in Bethlehem, the Magi, the people who heard him preach and saw the miracles, and, at the end of the sermon, the congregation gathered in the basilica. Here comes the last of the contrasts—Herod contrasted with the Christian faithful. In the final peroration that follows Leo's reference to the massacre of the innocents, he urges the people to love a chaste life, to pursue humility, to clothe themselves in patience, to walk steadily along the path of truth and life (*Tr*, 31.3). Though they are exhorted in the words of Col, 3.2 to relish the things that are above not the things that are on the earth and not to let earthly things hinder them, his congregation would not find these virtues shockingly at odds with the old Roman virtues that had been the foundation of the city. But Herod's *saevitia* and *impietas* are the opposite of civic virtue, inimical to all the social life of the city, destructive, wild, and uncontrolled.

Two natures united; an unchangeable plan freely lived; birth and death free and yet providential: these themes are brought together in the final peroration of the sermon (*Tr* 31.3) where he exhorts the faithful to raise their hearts to the beauty of eternal light. The salvation won by Christ is applied to mankind under the words *sacramenta* and *gesta*.[66] The *sacramenta* of human salvation are to be adored, the *gesta*, the deeds done, are to be pursued with zeal. This pairing is different from but related to the *remedium–exemplum* dyad introduced in the Christmas sermon. *Remedium* was the work of the divinity, the saving action of the loving God. *Exemplum* is the way that Christ is the fulfilment of the true man and the archetype of the Church in obedience and in glorification. *Sacramenta* are the saving acts of the Incarnate Word, the object of faith and cause of a loving response in the faithful. *Gesta* are the deeds which display the virtue of Christ and his mother, virtue that must be acquired by the believer and which prompts imitation. What the *gesta* demand is then stated: chastity like the Virgin, being a child like the Christ child, having

---

[66] *Erigite ergo, dilectissimi, fideles animos ad coruscantem gratiam luminis sempiterni, et inpensa humanae saluti sacramenta uenerantes, studium uestrum his quae pro uobis gesta sunt subdite.*

humility, patience, and fortitude. Though he does not refer to the *exemplum* of the feast, he is effectively saying that in celebrating the Epiphany certain aspects of the pattern of perfection established in Christ can be highlighted. He is drawing his congregation back to the sermons of the autumn, to the ecclesial and sacramental dimension of salvation. The *remedium* offered by God is effected in the *sacramenta* of the life of Christ. Christ becomes the *exemplum* of all Christians and his *gesta* inspire imitation; but the response of the believer to the *gesta* of Christ is neither individualistic nor subjective—it is prescribed by the *gesta* themselves and is to be pursued and experienced communally.

Leo's use of terminology is precise and regular.[67] His concern with language reveals several features of his theological project. First, the terms are never entirely novel and are usually derived from earlier Latin writers, notably Hilary and Augustine, but are given sharper and more consistent definition by Leo. He is inclined towards systematic clarity. Secondly, the fact that these terms appear so early in his written work, within months of his accession, underlines how far his theological education had taken him as he embarked on the task of preaching. These two points are evidence for his originality, consistency, and independence of thought. Thirdly, the terminology is an attempt to work out an economy of salvation more clearly consistent with a Christology of two natures in one person. Leo has found a structure of Christology and soteriology in Augustine to which he gives more systematic definition. Fourthly, the use of the soteriological terms points to a strikingly sacramental and ecclesial account of how salvation is appropriated by the Christian which concurs with his fundamental project of building up the community of believers in Rome, of making the Church coterminous with the city. Jesus's loving obedience to the Father's will is enacted in his *gesta* but the divine plan is realised for the faithful in his *sacramenta*. The *gesta* inspire imitation but in the *sacramenta* Christ becomes the *exemplum* for the whole Church. His soteriology is grounded in his Christology and is shaped by his ecclesiology.

---

[67] For a study of Leo's use of *hodie*, *praesens*, *renovare*, *sacramentum*, *exemplum*, see de Soos, *Le mystère liturgique*, esp. 78–98, though his reading of *exemplum* must be rectified in the light of Guzie, 'Exegetical and Sacramental Language.'

The Ecclesial Response: The Lenten Fast, 441

The community's response to the deeds of Christ then provides the main content of the next sermon (*Tr* 39A), preached for the Ember days of Lent just over a month later, on 9 February 441. It was extensively revised later. Here, Leo addresses the questions of how Satan was defeated in Christ's human nature and how that salvation is won again today. Christ's triumph is re-enacted, the struggle won afresh in the Church now. Christ defeats Satan in resisting temptation in the wilderness. Now, the Church must fight the same battle. This sermon therefore goes further in tying together his view of Christ, his hopes for the Church, and his understanding of salvation.

Leo opens the sermon by telling his congregation that the Lenten fast is prefigured by the fast of the Israelites to escape the domination of the Philistines in 1 Sam 7:6–11 (*Tr* 39.1). He locates the fast at once in the context of spiritual warfare. He advocates it as both a struggle with spiritual enemies and a way to correct their lives. There follows a passage in which he says that the combat must be conducted within each individual so that the mind, reason, and will, the *animus*, *mens*, and *ratio* will triumph over indulgence and govern the self and a man will find true peace and liberty (*Tr* 39.2) but he quickly reverts to and reinforces the ecclesial image of fasting with which he began the sermon when he spoke about the people of Israel. He depicts the Devil as making exceptional assaults on the Church in Lent as they prepare for Easter (*Tr* 39.2–3). This vivid image of the urgent reality of the Church's contest with evil is built on the idea that the Church is re-enacting the saving life of Christ.

He makes the point by linking Lent and Christ's fast in the desert. Christ was tempted and was victorious; this is both *auxilium* and also *exemplum*, yet another pairing.

But the one who is with us is stronger than the one who is against us, (cf 1 Jn 4.4) and through him we have power in whose strength we trust; because for this the Lord allowed himself to be tempted by the tempter so that we might be formed (*erudiremur*) by his *exemplum* by whose *auxilium* we are fortified (*munimur*). For he conquered the adversary, as you have heard, by the testimonies of the Law not by the power of strength so that by this very fact he might both more honour man and more punish the adversary since

the enemy of the human race was not to be defeated as though by God but as though by man.[68]

The subject of these actions, the Lord, is the Christ, the union of the two natures. The roles of the two natures are clearly stated, Christ as God giving *auxilium* and as man providing the *exemplum*. The two are not separate and uncoordinated, however. God can only give the *auxilium* through the *exemplum* afforded by the humanity; equally, the *exemplum* is constituted in the humanity by the divine *auxilium*. The structure of the sentence, with *auxilium* coming first but in the subordinate clause and *exemplum* coming second in the purpose clause, very carefully shows the relationship between the two actions of Christ: *auxilium* comes before *exemplum* but the purpose of the temptations was to provide *exemplum*. The *auxilium–exemplum* dyad is also drawn from Augustine. In what must have been an inspiration for this passage, Augustine outlined an *adiutorium–exemplum* pairing in discussing how Christ overcame temptation.[69] *Auxilium*, with overtones of military and political protection, is a stronger word than Augustine's *adiutorium*. The verb it is attached to, *munio*, is also a word with strong military resonances, suggesting the building of military fortifications. In a passage which uses a great deal of military language, the meaning of the phrase *munimur auxilio* is not 'strengthened by his help' but rather 'defended or fortified by his protection.'

The effect of Christ's humanity is expressed by the verb *erudio*. This word makes a deliberate contrast with the hard language of warfare in the paragraph; it speaks of peace and the city, freedom from roughness, rather than the wilderness and conflict. It is unlikely, however, that Leo intended *erudio* to suggest education as cultured learning but rather formation through instruction or enlightenment. When the sermon was revised, a long section on the contest with evil was inserted which included the phrase: *Nos itaque, dilectissimi, qui diuinis eruditionibus instituti, ad agonem praesentis certaminis scienter accedimus* (*Tr* 39.4B). The divine *eruditiones* make the people *scienter*

---

[68] *Tr* 39.3.
[69] *De Trin* 4.13.17, *Cui se ipse quoque temptandum praebuit ut ad superandas etiam temptationes eius mediator esset non solum per adiutorium uerum etiam per exemplum*, *CC* 50, 183.

as they enter the fray; the people are also *instituti* by them. So again, the phrase *erudiremur exemplo* does not mean 'taught by his example' but 'instructed or formed by his pattern.'

Christ triumphs not by the force of power but by the testimonies of the Law—a reference back to the antitheses of strength in weakness, the Lord of majesty in the reality of man already seen in the Christmas and Epiphany sermons. This alludes too to the role of scripture as *eruditio*. The temptations in the wilderness are a concrete example of the triumph of scripture and the victory of weakness. Christ defeats the Devil as it were as a man, not as it were as God, thereby honouring mankind and punishing the Devil. Here, Leo risks dividing Christ into two subjects and therefore two identities. The insertion of *quasi . . . quasi* is extremely telling. Leo cannot have forgotten Nestorius' description in his sermon against the Theotokos of the triumph of the human Christ in the wilderness. From Cassian, he had learned the perils of speaking of the unaided humanity reversing the sin of Adam. So here he softens the suggestion that Christ triumphs as man rather than as God by inserting *quasi* before each. The clumsiness of the modification only highlights how more satisfactory is his couplet of *exemplum* with either *remedium* or *auxilium*. Leo appears to have recognised the problem of dividing the roles of the humanity and divinity so sharply. In the revised version of the sermon (*Tr* 39.3B), he stressed that it was the same Christ who worked by *auxilium* and *exemplum* by changing *eius erudiremur exemplo* to *eiusdem erudiremur exemplo*. Then he slightly altered the sentence *cum hostis generis humani non quasi a Deo sed etiam quasi ab homine uinceretur*, where the *etiam* seems to set the two natures in contrast, suggesting that it was *even* or *really* by the humanity that the enemy of the human race was defeated. The *etiam* is removed and *iam* is inserted: *non quasi a Deo iam sed quasi ab homine uinceretur*. The *iam* softens the sense, suggesting *at this point* or *on this occasion* that it was not the divinity but the humanity that triumphed.

Leo has seen the danger of describing the humanity acting separately from the divinity and has tried to evade it; but the real problem he needs to address is the role of the divinity in the wilderness. He wants to describe the Devil being defeated in that same nature that he had defeated and yet he does not want to have the humanity functioning autonomously. If the humanity is carried by the divinity, then it is

not an even contest; the Devil is not truly defeated in the same human nature that fell in Adam; if the humanity acts independently, without divine aid, then Christ has been divided into two agents and therefore two identities, the problem of Nestorius. Leo sees the problem, tries to avoid it, but has no satisfactory resolution of it. The problem is essentially to identify the role of the divinity in the saving acts of Christ.

In the second edition of the sermon, Leo also added a lengthy insertion directly after these words (*Tr* 39.3–4B) bringing out more fully the force of the belief that Christ was victorious so that the Church might conquer now. The sacramental union of the Church now and the saving acts of Christ is evidently what Leo wanted to underline. That in turn led to a depiction of the Christian armed by Christ with the belt, boots, shield and helmet described in Eph 6.14–17 (*Tr* 39.4). This passage continues the military imagery of the description of the battle with the Devil and if read in the first edition, where it comes directly after the account of Christ's triumph as man, it can be seen as a vivid illustration of the *auxilium–exemplum* couplet. The armour and the weapons are given by Christ and the Spirit and they transform the Christian into a warrior like Christ.

The sermon ends with a lengthy exhortation to the people to fast and give alms (*Tr* 39.5–6), his most complete statement so far of the civic Christianity to which he called his congregation. Individual abstinence has its social effect in generosity to the poor, to prisoners, to debtors. It is a call to reconciliation and social harmony built on justice and mercy. He ends again by looking forward: Lent prepares for the Pasch so that the feast can be celebrated with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (*Tr* 39.6).

Christ's Triumph: The Pasch, 441

A month later, 16 March 441, Leo celebrated Palm Sunday with another long sermon (*Tr* 52), which was continued three days later on the Wednesday of Holy Week (*Tr* 53). The two sermons are linked: he ends one and then starts the next with references forward and back. The Palm Sunday sermon does not conclude with an exhortation to the people, as the sermons usually do; the peroration is left to the

end of the Wednesday sermon. They can therefore be taken together. Themes already touched on are resumed: the inscrutable designs of God's wisdom, the union of the two distinct natures, the oneness in will of Father and Son, the concealment of the power of majesty in the passion, this past event made present now. The principal points of the two sermons stress that the divinity and humanity of Christ are united in the Passion and that here we see Satan defeated and salvation won. The problem that had surfaced in his account of Christ's triumph in the wilderness was however going to return in his consideration of the Cross: what role does the divinity play in Christ's saving work?

The sermon opens with a description of the original sin from which mankind must be delivered with the quotation from Rm 5.12: sin came into the world through one man and through sin death and death thereby spread to all men for in him all have sinned. This traditional, Augustinian reading of the text, supported by the Vulgate translation of 'in him,' *in quo*, opened the way for Leo to explain that the Son of God had to become Son of Man to achieve salvation (*Tr* 52.1). This is all the explanation of why Christ has to be human that is offered. That is not Leo's problem in looking at the cross. The real problem is why he had to be God in the crucifixion to save the world.

The oldest extant narrative cycle of the Passion, which includes one of the oldest depictions of Christ crucified, is to be found on the four sides of an ivory box dating from shortly before Leo's pontificate, almost certainly with a Roman provenance.[70] It is naturalistic, conveying a sense of depth and some realism with fleshly figures and delicately modelled drapery.[71] It is thus another example of the classical revival in Rome of which basilicas such as Sta Maria Maggiore and Leo's own prose style are the most striking achievements. In its narrative realism, it is also reminiscent of Leo's sermons, which show the same enthusiasm for narrating the historical events of the life of Christ. But in that narrative the death of Christ was not so easily described. Before this ivory casket was made, it seems that

---

[70] E. Kitzinger, *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum and British Library*, 3rd edn. (London, 1983), fig. 6.

[71] Ibid. 30.

the crucifixion was never portrayed; the cross stood as a symbol of triumph but was not presented with Christ hanging upon it. On the casket, for all its naturalistic touches, the crucified Christ betrays no sign of pain: it is almost as though the artist has deliberately made the figure adopt a more artificial pose than any other character portrayed on the box. Leo's two passion sermons of 441 betray the same embarrassment about the crucifixion. He is anxious to defend it and insists several times (*Tr* 52.1, 2, 3; *Tr* 53.3) that it is not an obstacle to faith but comes from the loving strength of divine wisdom. His primary anxiety is that the crucifixion might seem incompatible with the divinity of Christ or the unity of his person. So he has to insist that though the two natures are distinct they are not separated on the cross (*Tr* 52.2–3). Leo's problem in this sermon is therefore to explain how the two natures work together in the crucifixion, or perhaps more accurately to define the role of the divinity in the crucifixion. His whole theological project over the previous seven months meets its toughest challenge here and Leo is largely unsuccessful in his attempt to deal with it.

Leo does not use one obvious way forward: he avoids the language of *communicatio idiomatum* in these sermons. Nowhere does he say that God suffers or dies. Since the problem with the crucifixion is reconciling it with Christ's divinity (*Tr* 52.2), talking about God suffering would not help. He does, however, want to assert Christ's divinity vigorously and so he stresses the passages in scripture that bring it out with typical narrative vividness: the scene in the garden in John where the men who have come to arrest him fall down when he says, 'I am he,' (*Tr* 52.3) and the earthquake and the darkness described by Matthew as the whole of creation responds to the death of the creator (*Tr* 53.2). But these vivid scenes only heighten the problem: what role does the divinity play in the Passion?

Repeated emphasis is laid on the divine plan of salvation. The divine dispensation forgave the patriarchs and prophets by Christ's saving act just as it saves people now (*Tr* 52.1). The crucifixion is the fulfilment of the dispensation of divine mercy and love (*Tr* 52.2). It was the free choice of the Son to act in accord with the plan and consent to be arrested (*Tr* 52.4). Father and Son have one will (*Tr* 52.5). Consequently, referring to Gal 4.3, believers are born not in slavery but are reborn as spiritual children of Abraham into the

family of liberty (*Tr* 53.3). Again, however, this reiteration of a divine plan freely fulfilled by Christ only sharpens the question: what role does Christ's divinity play on the Cross?

Leo is not so bold as to claim there is no conflict between divine majesty and the horror of death on a cross. As he embarks on his vivid re-telling of the arrest, he remarks that:

We must not be embarrassed about the cross of Christ, beloved, which comes from the power of divine wisdom not from the condition of sin. For, although the Lord Jesus truly suffered from our weakness and truly died, he did not however in this way so deprive himself of his glory that among the insults of the passion he exercised nothing of his divine operations.[72]

This begs again the key question for these two sermons: what are the divine operations that are exercised in the crucifixion? One way forward is to suggest that the divine operations are exercised by not being exercised. He suggests several times that Christ did not insist upon or else concealed his divine power (*Tr* 52.4, 5). The idea is found in Augustine's commentary on the arrest in the garden, which Leo paraphrases in the sermon.[73] This is very different from what he has said in earlier sermons about majesty taking on humility (*Tr* 21.2) or strength adored in weakness (*Tr* 31.2) for here the divine and human are set in sharp contrast. It is a very unsatisfactory account of divine condescension as it opens up the gap between the divine and human which Leo wants to avoid and leaves the divinity no active role as it withholds its power.

Another approach is to deploy an array of soteriological images, largely drawn directly from scripture, to describe how Christ won salvation in the Passion. Leo touches on but does not develop the Johannine theme of exaltation, Christ drawing all things to himself (Jn 12.32) (*Tr* 52.1), apart from the remark that by the condescension of divinity we are advanced (*Tr* 52.2). Instead, a battery of images of sacrifice and redemption is mobilised. We are redeemed at a great price (1 Cor 6.20, 7.23). Christ loved us and gave himself up for us (Eph 5.2) (*Tr* 52.5). When the good thief was forgiven, faith was rewarded for the debt of human transgressions had been abolished (Col 2.14) (*Tr* 53.1). Christ, the true and spotless lamb, is sacrificed

---

[72] *Tr* 52.3.
[73] Augustine, *Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium* 112.2–3, *CC* 36, 634–5.

(1 Cor 5.7) and man is redeemed by his precious blood (*Tr* 53.3). Along with these images of redemption and sacrifice, Leo does bring forward some idea of the solidarity of humanity and divinity in Christ leading to the reunion of mankind and God. Soteriological language similar to that first employed in the Christmas sermon is now used of the Resurrection. The fall of all mankind in Adam (citing Rm 5.12) is balanced by Christ bringing Resurrection (1 Cor 15.21) (*Tr* 52.1). We share in Christ's Resurrection, reformed in the image of him who was deformed for us, raised to the one who made the dust of our lowliness into the body of his glory (*Tr* 53.3). These images, however, demand some underpinning. How do the divine and human in Christ work together to achieve them?

A better approach is to see in the cross the expression of divine humility: *Humilitas igitur Diuinitatis nostra prouectio est* (*Tr* 52.2), divine humility is our advancement, a humility not shown in withholding its hand but in forgiveness and love. The clearest expressions of it come in the Wednesday sermon. When the good thief is forgiven, the two forms are seen as operating together:

This promise surpassed the human condition, for it issued not so much from the wood of the cross as the throne of divine power. From that height is given the reward of faith, in which the written debt of human transgression is abolished, because the 'form of God' did not separate itself from the 'form of a slave' (Phil 2.6–7), while even in this execution both inviolable Deity and passible nature preserved its own character and its own oneness.[74]

Divine forgiveness is the reward of faith. This is the key to the relationship in action of the two forms, the two natures of Christ. Leo remarks on how astonishing is the faith of the thief who has seen none of the miracles and heard no preaching. Faith is God's gift—a theme laid out already in the Christmas sermon where the Virgin Mary was a model of faith (*Tr* 21.1) and the Epiphany sermon where the faith of the Magi had been extensively discussed (*Tr* 31.1–2)—but here it is infused in the thief by the sight of the one who is a companion in his own punishment (*Tr* 53.1). The crucifixion is thus the instrument, even more powerful than the preaching and miracles of Christ, by which Christ's identity as God is revealed and faith is

---

[74] *Tr* 53.1.

instilled. The good thief's faith stands in contrast to the Jews and Judas. Judas is characterised (*Tr* 52.3) with many of the same qualities as Herod—violence, falseness, blindness—and is addressed directly in an apostrophe as fulfilling the will of God by futilely attempting to subvert it (*Tr* 52.5). Leo had said that Herod would have been a happy man had he imitated the faith of the Magi (*Tr* 31.2); here he addresses Judas and tells him that he could still have received pardon but Judas refused to believe that Jesus was the Son of God (*Tr* 52.5).

The meaning of faith thus becomes more sharply defined: belief that Christ is God and therefore an ability to do his will, like Mary and the Magi, and to accept his forgiveness like the penitent thief. The failure to believe that Christ is God not only excludes the sinner from forgiveness but leads to futile and destructive attempts to go against the will of God, like Herod or Judas. Faith is a divine gift but it appears to be available to all. It is clearly the fault of Herod, the Jews, or Judas that they do not accept Christ. It is prompted by signs: the angel's message to Mary, the star for the Magi, the preaching and miracles of Christ, and now the crucifixion for the penitent thief. Faith is recognising the divinity through the medium of the humanity and so adoring God in the child or asking forgiveness of the dying man.

It is remarkable in this discussion of the Passion that Leo does not appeal to the traditional image of Christ the priest offering himself as the victim, one he could have found repeatedly expressed in Ambrose.[75] Had he combined it with 1 Tim 2.5, he could have offered an account of the sacrifice of the Mediator similar to that provided by Augustine in *De Trinitate* 4.13.16–4.14.19, a passage he was almost certainly familiar with given the resemblance of its *adiutorium–exemplum* structure to his own *auxilium–exemplum* dyad in *Tr* 39.3.[76] There might even be an echo of it in these sermons: Augustine uses the same allusion to Col 2.14 and the blotting out of the *chirographum*[77] as Leo in the Wednesday sermon, *Tr* 53.1. This passage would have provided Leo with an explanation of how Christ is both priest and victim, perfectly just priest and wholly pure victim, offering the sacrifice to himself as divine Word in union with the Father, and uniting the Church in the offering as the Body of Christ,

[75] E.g. Ambrose, *De Fide* 3.84–9, *CSEL* 78, 138–40.
[76] Augustine, *De Trin* 4.13.17, *CC* 50, 183.   [77] Ibid. *CC* 50, 184.

thus pulling together the four questions he asked of any sacrifice: to whom is it offered, who offers it, what is offered, and for whom is it offered.[78]

This seems to expose a central gap in his thinking in the spring of 441 which he would work hard to rectify in the coming years. He does however appeal to another Augustinian theological motif to account for the unified action of God and man in Christ, the word *sacramentum*. The word had already appeared in the Epiphany sermon. The Magi manifested the *sacramentum* of their faith with their gifts (*Tr* 31.2) and the *sacramentum* that is to be adored was linked to the *gesta* that were to be followed (*Tr* 31.3). Here the idea is given far more prominence. It is in fact the opening word of the Palm Sunday sermon (*Tr* 52.1): the Lord undertook the *sacramentum* of his lordly passion. When Peter cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, it was an action against the *sacramentum* of redemption (*Tr* 52.4). In the peroration that ends both sermons, Leo encourages his congregation to embrace the *sacramentum* of the saving Pasch and be reformed in the image of the one who conformed himself to their deformity (*Tr* 53.3).[79] The meaning of *sacramentum* is thus God's eternal plan of salvation and its historical realisation. In other places (e.g. *Tr* 21.3 referring to baptism) it means a feast or rite that actualises the saving work of Christ. The closest he gets to articulating how the *sacramentum* was accomplished by both natures is to describe it as the dispensation of mercy and the act of devotion. Divine mercy bestowed and human devotion expressed as filial obedience (*Tr* 52.2).[80] There is a hint here of the mediatory work of Christ but it remains undeveloped.

Leo gives a narrower definition to the word *sacramentum* than his predecessors, making a careful distinction that no one had made before Augustine between *mysterium* and *sacramentum*, and sharpening even his.[81] The Palm Sunday sermon opened with the

[78] Ibid. 4.14.19, *idem ipse unus uerusque 'mediator' per sacrificium pacis reconcilians nos deo unum cum illo maneret cui offerebat, unum in se faceret pro quibus offerebat, unus ipse esset qui offerebat et quod offerebat*, CC 50, 186–7.

[79] *Amplectamur salutaris Paschae mirabile sacramentum, et ad eius imaginem, qui deformitati nostrae conformis factus est, reformemur.*

[80] *Totumque illud sacramentum, quod simul et humanitas consummauit et Deitas, dispensatio fuit misericordiae et actio pietatis.*

[81] C. Mohrmann, 'Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes Chrétiens,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 47 (1954), 141–52 has shown that the Greek *musterion* was

sacramentum which the Lord undertook (*Tr* 52.1); later in the sermon, Leo refers to the *mysterium* that he had undertaken (*Tr* 52.4). The reason why *mysterium* is used here is because it expresses the idea of God's eternal plan, the implications of which are known by Christ, rather than his saving work putting the plan into effect. This is the first sign of what will become a regular pattern of distinguishing between the plan as it can be known or believed, *mysterium*, and the plan as it unfolds in historical reality, *sacramentum*.[82]

In these sermons, Leo struggled to explain how the humanity and divinity worked together in the *sacramentum* of the Passion. He came closest to an answer at two points. First, that the crucifixion led the good thief to faith, repentance, and salvation (*Tr* 53.1); faith is understood as a divine gift mediated through a human sign leading to the acceptance of Christ's divinity and his promises. Secondly, he describes it as *dispensatio misericordiae* and *actio pietatis*, allocating functions to the two natures that could have been developed with a fuller understanding of Christ's mediatory role in the sacrifice, ideas to which he would return in later years.

The Appropriation of Salvation: Pentecost, Peter and Paul, the September Fast, 441

The next sermon to survive from his first year of preaching is the Pentecost sermon (*Tr* 78). It comes as a surprise. Instead of taking the opportunity of offering a discourse on the Holy Spirit, Leo speaks about the coming fast. Unlike the Lenten fast, which was an ecclesial experience of unity with Christ, this fast is shaped by the Holy Spirit. The whole divinity of Father and Son in the presence of the Holy Spirit presided in the leaders of the early Church (*Tr* 78.1). Among the

translated as either *mysterium* or *sacramentum* in very early Latin writing, with a preference for *sacramentum* as a way of avoiding the pagan overtones of *mysterium*, which sounded as though it referred to the mystery religions, while also sounding more concrete, with overtones of oath or initiation ceremony or sacred thing or sacred ritual. Charles Couturier, '*Sacramentum* et *Mysterium* dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin,' in H. Rondet (ed.) *Études Augustiniennes* (Paris, 1953), 162–332, esp. 269, has shown that Augustine tends to treat *mysterium* as doctrine and *sacramentum* as doctrine put into effect.

[82] G. Hudon, 'Les présupposés "sacramentals",' 337.

sacramenta of heavenly doctrine, this fast has been conceived through the teaching of the Paraclete (*Tr* 78.1). Here the word *sacramentum* is used in the same sense as when applied to baptism (e.g. *Tr* 21.1, where baptism makes the believers temples of the Holy Spirit): it applies the saving work of Christ to the Christian. The fast is largely defensive: temples of the Holy Spirit, watered by the divine stream, should not be conquered by lust (*Tr* 78.3); the fast is designed to protect believers against incorporeal foes (*Tr* 78.2); after the joy of the Resurrection and Ascension, this is a fast to correct undue licence (*Tr* 78.3).

He offers an explanation of why Christ's saving victory has to be battled for repeatedly in the lives of Christians:

Although divine grace gives victory daily to his saints, it does not however remove the occasion of struggle, because this also is part of the protector's mercy, who always wished something to remain for mutable nature to conquer lest it should be proud of the completed battle.[83]

Leo makes no allusion here to Col 1.24 where St Paul says he will make up in his flesh what was lacking in the Passion of Christ; indeed he is careful to refer to the battle as completed; but it is possible that that text has some part on his thinking. Paul speaks of himself as making up in his flesh what is lacking for the Body of Christ which is the Church. Leo does not see his audience going out to fight their individual battles, privately appropriating the salvation won by Christ. Rather, it is an ecclesial act. It began with the teachers who filled all the sons of the Church with their *exemplis et traditionibus*, perhaps best translated as ways of acting and body of doctrine (*Tr* 78.2). Thus the fast is observed communally and linked again in the peroration to charity to the poor and needy (*Tr* 78.4) and culminates in vigil at Peter's tomb.

As with Leo's earlier sermons for the Ember days and the great collection, this is more a sermon about what the Church is and should be than about Christ or the Spirit. Given the difficulty that Leo had had in Holy Week of articulating the relationship of divine and human in Christ on the Cross, it is striking that on the great feast of Pentecost he was again unable or unwilling to explain the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ's Resurrection and Ascension except in terms of

---

[83]   *Tr* 78.2.

the ascetical and charitable benefits of the fast as a way of purifying and building up the Church. He was careful the following year to devote a full-scale Pentecost sermon to the work of the Holy Spirit (*Tr* 77) and a separate sermon on the fast following the feast (*Tr* 80), which suggests either that his thinking developed considerably in the course of 441–2 or he recognised the inadequacy of his treatment of the Spirit in 441.

The feast of saints Peter and Paul, 29 June 441, is the occasion of the next sermon (*Tr* 82). It was heavily revised for the second edition of the collection (*Tr* 82B). In either version, it is an oratorical tour de force. Peter and Paul are celebrated as figures transformed by Christ and appointed by the Holy Spirit, who established the Church of Rome. Several contrasts are drawn: Peter and Paul are contrasted with Romulus and Remus (*Tr* 82.1); the citadel of Rome with the cross of Christ (*Tr* 82.5); the eternal plan of God with the history of the Roman Empire (*Tr* 82.2); the peace spread from Rome by the Gospel with the growing Empire won by war (*Tr* 82.1); attempts to destroy the Church by martyrdom and persecution with the spreading of the Gospel (*Tr* 82.6). But all this is presented in terms of providence and transfiguration. The citadel of Rome is opened to the Cross just as Peter, who sank when he tried to walk on the water and was frightened of Caiaphas's maid, was transformed by the love of Christ in the three-fold profession at the shore of the sea of Tiberias (*Tr* 82.4–5). The Empire's growth prepared for the evangelisation of the world (*Tr* 82.2), martyrdom increased the Church (*Tr* 82.6) These were points that Leo reinforced in the second recension, where both passages were considerably expanded (82.2B, 82.6B).

This is a sermon about the real consequences of the Resurrection and Pentecost. Peter is the hero of the sermon—Paul is relegated to having been off founding churches elsewhere when Peter entered Rome, catching up later and joining Peter in martyrdom (*Tr* 82.4, 6). The interest in Peter, however, is motivated by more than pious reverence. He is the best example of the appropriation of salvation by the believer. His fear when walking on the water or in the courtyard of the High Priest's house is contrasted with the ardour of intrepid charity with which he entered Rome: 'You had already undoubtedly conceived this ardour of intrepid charity when the profession of your love for the Lord was confirmed by the *mysterium* of the threefold

questioning.'[84] Peter's intrepid charity is thus not his own but Christ's gift to him, strengthened by the threefold questioning and the commission at the sea of Tiberias, is itself a *mysterium* because it reveals God's identity and saving plan. His love is fearless and so too is his faith, which was increased by so many signs of miracles, gifts of grace and proofs of virtue that he carries the trophy of the cross of Christ into the Roman citadel, thereby following the divine plan (*diuinis dispensationibus*) (*Tr* 82.5). In this, he can be contrasted with Nero who, like Herod and Judas in earlier sermons, is presented as wild, mad, and cruel, futilely opposing the divine plan, for a religion founded on the *sacramentum* of the cross cannot be extinguished; so Peter and Paul were martyred and were the seed of future martyrs (*Tr* 82.6).

In a very small compass, Leo addresses the question at the heart of Augustine's *City of God*: what is the relationship between the Gospel and the world, between the city of God and the city of Rome? Peter was transformed by the forgiveness of the risen Christ; Rome can be transformed by the triumph of the cross and the martyrs. The tension between Augustine's two cities is not unwound; there is no suggestion that the triumph of Christ's cross can ever be complete in this world; but the transforming power of Christ can be seen working in history and Leo wants his audience to see themselves as heirs to an alternative history. This is a further aspect of the civic Christianity that Leo wanted to inculcate in Rome. Just as the Christian calendar had replaced the old pagan one with a completely different list of red letter days, just as the classical revival basilicas built by the recent popes had offered an alternative topography to the city while claiming to represent its cultural inheritance, just as Leo's sermons were the finest orations to be heard in the city, so the Christian history of the city replaced and yet fulfilled the pagan history.

Leo addresses the congregation in the singular as *Roma* and applies to them one of his favourite texts, 1 Peter 2.9, that they have become a holy race, a chosen people, and inserts the word *civitas* to say that they have become a priestly and royal city (*Tr* 82.1). With a great flourish, he announces at the outset that the whole world is a participant in all the sacred solemnities celebrating what has been done for the salvation of all—again a clear statement of the universal saving will

---

[84]   *Tr* 82.4.

of God—but Rome itself is an instrument of universal salvation (*Tr* 82.1). Rome is the mistress of the world (*Tr* 82.4) but having been the mother of error she becomes the daughter of truth (*Tr* 82.1). Although the city ruled almost all nations, it submitted to the errors of all nations (*Tr* 82.2) The cross carried into the city by Peter delivers it from Nero under whom all innocence, modesty, and liberty was suffering (*Tr* 82.6). With what is plainly a reference to the catacombs, he says that the city is now encircled with an ennobled populace, like a jewelled diadem (*Tr* 82.6). When he revised the sermon, he strengthened the passage where he described the errors of the past and how they had to be overcome by the light of truth (*Tr* 82.3B). He also greatly expanded the brief allusion to Rome as the head from which the light of truth would pour out to the whole body of the world (*Tr* 82.3) to claim that providence had made the Roman Empire so great that its boundaries touched all other peoples, that it was divinely planned that through the Empire inexpressible grace could reach the whole world (*Tr* 82.2B). This is civic Christianity: 'Although, increased by many victories, you have spread out the law of your Empire by land and sea, what warlike labour subjected is less than what the Christian peace has conquered (*Tr* 82.1).'[85] This sermon is followed by the last in the series (*Tr* 86), another brief announcement of the September fast, which stresses the communal and regular nature of the fast and its counterpart in deeds of charity and concludes with the customary reference to the vigil on Saturday with Peter. Thus the sermon in which the building up of the Gospel of Christ in history in the triumph of the Church is given fullest expression is counterbalanced in the next sermon by a customary reference to vigil, as though eschatology must repeatedly punctuate any account of how Christ is saving the world.

Conclusion

It is clear from this reading of the first cycle of sermons that they should not be read *singulariter* but *seriatim*. They cannot be taken individually without the risk of misunderstanding. Read in the order

---

[85] *Tr* 82.1.

in which they were preached, their distinctiveness and originality become plain. However derivative some of their ideas or language may be, they are evidently the work of one man who has constructed a confident and consistent picture of his own. Some of the puzzles in the sermons can be solved by reading them in sequence— why the brief sermons on the fasts are always included, why the Pentecost sermon is about the coming fast rather than the feast— and some sermons are found to have a fresh significance when read in the light of what follows, as with those for the anniversary of Leo's consecration or the feast of Peter and Paul. Their purpose too becomes intelligible. Against a calendar that was still predominantly pagan in its annual rhythms and festivals, these sermons provide an immensely dignified set of orations ennobling the alternative Christian understanding of the year. They provide a catechism of Christian doctrine built around the mystery of Christ extended throughout the year. They assert the eminence of Rome's venerable Christian community and its popes. But above all, they are a complex essay in theology that can only be appreciated when the sermons are read in the right order. They are essentially an attempt to show that a sacramental and ecclesial soteriology must be systematically grounded in Christology.

These sermons show that from the outset Leo's theology is fundamentally ecclesial and sacramental. Salvation is the work of Christ in the Church, experienced corporately in its prayer and worship, in charity and hope, above all in the dynamic of reliving afresh Christ's own transforming journey of obedience in the course of the Church's year. Thus for Leo a set of liturgical sermons is the best vehicle for laying out a systematic theology of salvation uniting theology and prayer. It is in this context that his Christology can be understood more deeply. Leo holds everything together with appeals to the loving, eternal, inscrutable plan of God which Christ freely enacts. Christ is God and man, one person uniting two distinct natures. He understands the divine plan and the *mysteria* it must include. His merciful humility as God is to be matched by his loving obedience as man. His saving acts—birth, manifestation, the Pasch—are the *sacramenta* of the mysteries, making them known to us, effecting salvation. Each *sacramentum* reveals the two natures united in Christ but everything points towards the Pasch. Here Christ is most obviously human and

divine: man in his death and his glorification into a new creation in rising from the dead and God in his loving condescension on the Cross and in the transforming power of glorification in the Resurrection. The two natures are united but distinct and the divinity cannot be harmed by the suffering of the humanity. These *sacramenta* are happening today, every year, celebrated and experienced ecclesially. The Church is built by the Spirit, fashioned into the likeness of Christ who was himself transformed in his humanity to be the *exemplum*. By responding in love and praying in vigil, the community allows the Spirit to make the glorifying salvation of Christ present now.

In 440–1, Leo set out his agenda but it is clear that he still had a great deal of work to do. He had learned much in the aftermath of the Nestorian controversy. Christ must be God to save the world yet, in the light of the Formula of Reunion and his reading of Cyril, the *Libellus* of Leporius and his reading of Augustine, his exploration of Hilary and Ambrose, it was equally clear to Leo that it was as man that God acted in salvation. He had begun to find not only formulas, such as two natures coming together in one person or the language of *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, but he was probing the relationship between the natures in Christ's saving work. The weakest points in the sermons were exactly where the relationship of the two natures was most obscure: in the Passion and then in the sending of the Holy Spirit. Future paschal and Ascension sermons would address those weaknesses.

5

Leo's Theological Development, 441–5

Introduction

There were gaps in Leo's theological achievement in the first year after his election. The crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the work of the Holy Spirit all demanded fuller exposition. Fundamentally, Leo needed to give more thought to the role of the divinity of Christ and the relationship of the divinity and humanity of Christ. These were the main areas of theological endeavour in his sermons over the next four years.

In his second and third years of preaching, 441–3, Leo developed his understanding of the role of the divinity of Christ in salvation. He offered two main accounts of soteriology. One saw the life and death of Christ as the triumph of innocent suffering over the Devil who unjustly demanded that he pay the penalties of human sin; on this account, Christ's humanity could only be sinless because he was God. The other saw Christ as the mediator who brings God and humanity together in his own person and achieves in himself an exchange of gifts which offers humanity solidarity with God and participation in his glory. Both accounts, then, required a Christ who was both God and man.

His fourth year of preaching was profoundly affected by the discovery, in the autumn of 443, of a group of Manichaeans in Rome. Leo successfully prosecuted them—his first great triumph. His response to Manichaeism in 443–4 led him to a further appraisal of the humanity of Christ and to a deeper appreciation of both Christ's suffering and his glorification. This in turn led him to a clearer exposition of the unity of divine and human in Christ. He summed up much that had gone before in his last cycle of sermons, 444–5,

where he also addressed the Transfiguration of Christ and developed his understanding of the Ascension. With the death of Cyril of Alexandria in 444, Leo clearly felt he could assert himself as the most significant figure in the worldwide Church; his position was bolstered by his triumph the following year over Hilary of Arles, recognised by an imperial decree, which marked the apogee of papal power in the West. By the autumn of 445, Leo could look back on five years of remarkable success and it is likely that the gathering of the first collection of sermons was in some way a celebration of his achievements.

The Divine Dispensation in the Second and Third Cycles, 441–3

How the impassible God could act in a human life was at the heart of the Christological debates of the first half of the fifth century.[1] Nestorius and Theodoret of Cyrus were at least as driven by the need to safeguard divine impassibility as the desire to give an active role to Christ's humanity in salvation; both feared that Cyril of Alexandria imperilled the transcendence of God. It is not surprising that Leo was emphatic that God cannot suffer or change and that he was inclined therefore to be careful in distinguishing Christ's divine and human natures,[2] but what is interesting is that his commonest way of asserting divine immutability is to talk of God's eternal plan, his unchanging purpose, fulfilled in Christ.

   Leo's first encounter with theological controversy was the start of the last phase of the Pelagian controversy in 418; his initiation into theological enquiry was the Nestorian crisis. In both, he had to face the problem of the changelessness of God. It was Augustine's insistence that the grace of election must be efficacious, that those whom God has chosen must be saved, which opened up the disputes about

---

[1] J.J. O'Keefe, 'Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology,' *Theological Studies*, 58 (1997), 39–60.

[2] G.D. Dunn, 'Divine Impassibility and Christology in the Christmas Homilies of Leo the Great,' *Theological Studies*, 62 (2001), 71–85; 'Suffering Humanity and Divine Impassibility: the Christology of the Lenten Homilies of Leo the Great,' *Augustinianum*, 41 (2001), 257–71.

the freedom of the will and the universal saving love of God which coloured the last decade of Augustine's life. Augustine could not allow the grace of election to be inefficacious for that would imperil God's eternal purpose, introducing a distinction between what God would prefer and what he actually achieves. Just the same concern with divine providence made him cautious in talking about God's miraculous intervention in the world;[3] miracles are in direct continuity with and are the fulfilment of God's creative work rather than in some way a contradiction of it.[4] In the Nestorian crisis, through Cassian's *De Incarnatione*, Leo met Leporius' *Libellus* which admitted that the starting point of his adoptionist Christology had been a desire to safeguard God's impassibility. The development of an account of one person in two natures, so that the person of Christ both is the divine Word and yet is also a distinct subject of action and attribution from the divine Word, was probably Augustine's response to that problem. Leo was to follow Augustine in Christology but not with regard to predestination.

This preoccupation with God's immutability and his unchanging will, however, shows itself in Leo's frequent reiteration that Christ fulfilled God's eternal plan, the *dispensatio consilii*. He opened his Christmas sermon of 441 with a grand exposition of the divine plan of salvation. The *sacramentum* of salvation, promised from the beginning, fulfilled in the end, to remain without end, is renewed for us by the circling around of the year.[5] The all-powerful and loving God, whose nature is goodness, whose will is power, whose work is mercy, marked out in advance the remedy prepared at the very beginning of the world at the moment that the Devil's malice poisoned humanity to death by prophesying that the seed of a woman would crush the serpent's head:[6] the *praeparata remedia* of 441 became the

---

[3] E.g. *De Genesi ad Litteram* 9.15–8, *CSEL* 28, 286–93, *In Ioh Tr* 8.1–3, 9.1, 17.1, 24.1, *CC* 36, 81–3, 90–1, 169–70, 244.

[4] M. Jackson, 'Miracles and "Spiritual Correctness" in the Theology of St Augustine,' *Studia Patristica*, 38 (2001), 184–9.

[5] *Tr* 22.1: *Reparatur enim nobis salutis nostrae annua reuolutione sacramentum, ab initio promissum, in fine redditum, sine fine mansurum.*

[6] *Tr* 22.1: *Deus enim omnipotens et clemens, cuius natura bonitas, cuius uoluntas potentia, cuius opus misericordia est, statim ut nos diabolica malignitas ueneno suae mortificauit inuidiae, praeparata renouandis mortalibus pietatis suae remedia inter ipsa mundi primordia praesignauit.*

praedestinata remedia in the revised version of the sermon a decade later. Leo was rooting his account of salvation here in God's original plan of creation and therefore, more deeply, in the divine nature itself. The Devil was rejoicing to have inflicted death on man and to have found companions in evil:

and that God, compelled by reason of just severity, had changed his ancient opinion of man whom he had made in such honour; it was necessary, beloved, by the dispensation of a secret plan, for the unchangeable God, whose will cannot be deprived of its goodness, to complete by a more hidden *sacramentum* the first disposition of his love.[7]

God's original plan could not be thwarted because God is unchanging; God's love could not be revoked because it is his very nature to love. Therefore salvation is the working out of God's original creative purpose and thus of his own nature. For that reason, God's loving will extends to all humanity, as he observed in his Epiphany sermon for 443:

The providence of the mercy of God, having ordained to help the perishing world in these last days, determined beforehand the salvation of all nations in Christ so that, because all the nations had long been turned aside from the worship of the true God by wicked error and God's special people Israel itself had almost completely fallen away from the instituted laws, 'with all imprisoned under sin, he might have mercy upon all.' (Gal 3.22, Rm 11.32)[8]

Later in the year, on Good Friday 443, Leo spoke of Jesus obtaining the result of the eternal plan from the wickedness of those who resisted him. At the same time, Jesus did not exclude them from forgiveness or deny the mystery of salvation even to his persecutors.[9]

As Leo, in his Christmas sermon of 442, considered why Christ was born at a particular time and not much earlier, he made the interesting observations first that the saving will of God was always at work and secondly that the mystery of great compassion saved those who believed in it when promised as well as those who received it:

Therefore let them stop their complaints who speak against the divine plans with impious murmuring and talk about the lateness of the Lord's nativity as if that which was done in the last age of the world was not paid out

---

[7]　*Tr* 22.1.　　　[8]　*Tr* 33.1.　　　[9]　*Tr* 70.2.

to the previous ages. For the Incarnation of the Word caused the things that were to be done, which were done, and the *sacramentum* of human salvation was never at rest in ancient times. What the apostles preached, the prophets announced nor was that fulfilled too late which has always been believed ... For the grace of God, by which the whole body of the saints is always justified, was not begun by Christ being born but increased and this '*sacramentum* of great love' [1 Tim 3.16] with which now the whole world is filled, was so powerful in its significations that those who believed it when it was promised obtained it no less than those who received it when it was given.[10]

This puts a strong emphasis on prophecy and prefigurations of Christ as objects of faith and therefore Christ accomplishing his saving work too by the instilling of faith. In the Good Friday sermon of 443, Leo condemned the Jews who did not benefit from the witness given by the Law, from the images of the mysteries (*mysteriorum imagines*) or the oracles of the prophets.[11] Though he pointed out that the images and figures, such as the various sacrifices offered in accordance with the Law, ceased in the Paschal Mystery, they were nevertheless part of the saving plan of God.[12] Their abolition was sudden, almost violent, in the death of Christ,[13] yet elsewhere Leo happily defended the December fast as a practice inherited from the Jewish Law explaining that unlike many ritual observances such as distinctions between food, different kinds of baptism and sacrifices of birds and livestock this was a useful practice not abolished by grace, whereas the others which bore the figures of future things were finished when what they signified was fulfilled.[14] Sometimes, Leo expounded the way the Old Testament prefigured the New; he pointed out, for instance, that the Law was given fifty days after the Passover and Exodus and that the Spirit was given fifty days after the Christian Pasch.[15] It allowed him occasionally to indulge in some creative typological references to the Old Testament: talking about the flight into Egypt, he described Christ as the true Joseph who is the true bread to end mankind's famine, entering the land of the

---

[10]   *Tr* 23.4.   [11]   *Tr* 70.2.   [12]   *Tr* 54.1 (Palm Sun. 442).

[13]   *Tr* 54.5: *Hoc mane uobis* [i.e. the Jews] *templum et altaria diruit, legem et prophetas ademit, regnum et sacerdotium sustulit, in luctum aeternum omnia festa conuertit.*

[14]   *Tr* 15.2 (Dec. Fast 442).   [15]   *Tr* 75.1 (Pentecost 443).

first Passover which prepared for him as the unique victim;[16] talking about the crucifixion, he observed that he who fell because of the tree is raised up by the tree and that the food which occasioned sin is washed out by the taste of gall and vinegar.[17]

Nowhere does Leo present a full-dress review of salvation history but that does not mean that it is an insignificant or even inchoate aspect of his thought. His understanding of God's working in history underpins his view of the immediacy of salvation in the representation in the Church's year of the saving acts of Christ; it shapes his dramatic, historically vivid reading of scripture and retelling each year of the events of the Epiphany or the arrest and trials of Christ; above all, it places the life of Christ, and therefore ultimately the person of Christ, at the heart of the history of mankind. A pattern emerges of *figurae* or *imagines* which anticipate and therefore bear the *mysteria* of God's saving plan and the saving work of Christ; the *mysteria* in turn are accomplished in the *sacramenta* which are Christ's saving deeds and which are celebrated and made effective in the *sacramenta* which are the life of the Church.

The Saving Significance of Christ's Two Natures in the Second and Third Cycles, 441–3

The Saving Work of the Two Natures

In 442, in his third Christmas sermon, Leo's account of the union and also the distinction of the two natures in Christ reached the fullest expression it had yet found.[18] He established that the primary actor in the Incarnation and therefore the ultimate identity of Christ is the Son of God, the Creator, and Lord, who chose to be born of the Virgin Mary. Then he insisted on the full reality of the two natures: the birth produced in one offspring both a human and a divine nature. Though Leo did not use the word *persona* to describe the union,[19] he

---

[16]   *Tr* 33.4 (Epiphany 443).   [17]   *Tr* 57.4 (Wed. of Holy Week 443).

[18]   *Tr* 23.

[19]   *Tr* 23.1: *Hic enim mirabilis sacrae Virginis partus uere humanam uereque diuinam una edidit prole naturam, quia non ita proprietates suas tenuit utraque substantia, ut personarum in eis posset esse discretio*; the Ballerini text reprinted in Migne, PL 54.200A and followed by Dolle in SC 22bis, 96 follows a late MS emendation and introduces

was clearly using the same concept that he had already labelled with that term in his Christmas sermon of two years before.[20] He ruled out false interpretations such as finding in Christ a distinction of persons or describing him as a creature inhabited by his Creator. The two natures are not components brought together; rather, one nature assumed and the other was assumed. It is a personal not a composite union. Nevertheless, the two come together into such a unity that there is one Son who is equal to the Father in divinity and inferior in humanity.[21] Each form, divine and human, is perfect and complete in its attributes, the human attributes being those primordially intended for man, and neither form diminishes the other.[22] Just over three months later, Leo spoke of the dead Christ on both Good Friday and Holy Saturday, observing that even death could not divide the natures united in him.[23]

The real problem that Leo faced in this carefully balanced account of the union and distinction of the natures was to explain how they worked together for salvation. In his Palm Sunday sermon of 443, Leo declared that both the divine and human in Christ were essential for salvation: 'Both should be accepted, both believed, because no human being could be saved except by both.'[24]

In his first cycle of sermons, it was plain that Leo had had great difficulty giving an adequate account of the role of the divinity. As he launched into his second year of preaching, he had found the way forward. He developed two distinct but related models of salvation, each of which afforded coordinated roles for the divine and the human natures of Christ, both of which he had already touched on in the first cycle of sermons. One was the idea of Christ's mediatorial role, uniting God and mankind and bestowing the divine upon humanity while representing humanity before God. The other was that the Devil was overcome by Christ's humility rather than his power, a triumph of innocence over strength. Both were Augustinian. The two accounts of salvation differed in what they depicted mankind as being saved from—alienation from God or the power of the Devil.

---

the word *persona* as the outcome of the birth; Chavasse, *CC* 138, CCX justifies his reliance on an older tradition in omitting it, making the two natures in one offspring the outcome.

[20] *Tr* 21.2.   [21] *Tr* 23.1.   [22] *Tr* 23.2.
[23] *Tr* 70.3 (Good Fri. 443); 71.2 (Holy Sat. 443).   [24] *Tr* 56.1.

They therefore also differed in what they said humanity was offered in salvation—union with God in a glorified life or freedom from sin. They thus offered different explanations of the function of the divinity or humanity in Christ and the relationship between them. The first depended entirely on the union of the natures in Christ and the resonance between them. The second, however, depended on the innocent humanity of Christ; it was not so easy to describe the role of the divinity in robbing the Devil of his rights. One emphasised the union of the natures, the other emphasised their distinctiveness.

   As Leo used the two models *pari passu*,[25] it is not surprising that he veered between stressing the gap between the natures and their closeness. On the one hand, he often spoke of the majesty veiled in the Incarnation,[26] of the divine power curtailed in enduring temptation or suffering,[27] of the divine impassibility allowing things to happen to him which human mortality suffers in its misery.[28] On the other hand, he frequently used the model of Christ mediating the divine to humanity, speaking of the two natures always working together and never separated, of the divine expressed in the human.[29] What Leo needed to do was to bring the two models together to reinforce each other. The inevitable result would be the recognition of union rather than separation of the natures in action. The answer he found was rooted in the sinlessness of Christ and the humility of God.[30]

---

[25] Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 69–83.   [26] *Tr* 22.2,4 (Christmas 441).

[27] *Tr* 40.3 (Lent 442); 57.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 443).

[28] *Tr* 71.2 (Holy Sat. Vigil 443).

[29] *Tr* 22.2 (Christmas 441); 54.1, 3 (Palm Sun. 442); 56.1 (Palm Sun. 443); 70.3 (Good Fri. 443); 71.2 (Holy Sat. 443).

[30] D. Mozeris, *Doctrina Sancti Leonis Magni de Christo Restitutore et Sacerdote* (Mundelein, IL, 1940) provides a useful synthesis of Leo's soteriology but fails to see the tension between his two approaches; J. Rivière, 'La Rédemption chez saint Léon le Grand,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 9 (1929), 17–42, 153–87, focuses entirely on the Devil's rights to the exclusion of mediation. L. Eizenhöfer, 'Das Opfer der Gläubigen in den Sermonen Leos des Grossen,' in F.X. Arnold and B. Fischer (eds.), *Die Messe in der Glaubensverkündigung: Kerygmatische Fragen* (Freiburg, 1950), 79–107, provides an excellent account of the Church's participation in Christ's sacrifice rooted in Leo's one/person, two/natures Christology; for a review of Leo's soteriology of the defeat of the Devil, of the restoration of the image in the second Adam, and the baptism of the nations manifesting the triumph over the Devil, see Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 69–83.

The Triumph of Justice

The great weakness of the traditional account of the triumph of Christ's sinlessness over the Devil's power was that it put the spotlight on the humanity and left the divinity in the wings. It was, however, a model much favoured by Leo. He often said that God could have overwhelmed the Devil by force but chose instead to triumph by justice.[31] The best account of it was in his Christmas sermon of 441 in a section that he deleted in the second edition:

For the mercy of God is true, since many ways were available to him for ineffably restoring the human race and he chose this way most powerfully for achieving it, by which for the destruction of the Devil's work he would not use the strength of power but the reason of justice. For the arrogance of the ancient foe had not captured for himself a tyrannical right over all men unjustly; nor did he weigh them down with unwarranted dominion whom he had induced of their own accord to come into his service from the law of God. Thus he could not have taken from him the original slavery of the human race unless he should be conquered by that which he had subjugated.[32]

Leo went on to explain that the Devil, assuming that Christ was an ordinary mortal subject to original sin, unjustly plagued him with suffering and finally inflicted death upon him, exceeding his rights and thereby forfeiting his just claims on humanity.[33]

This deeply traditional passage reads like a summary of Augustine's explanation in the *De Trinitate* that God could have chosen other ways of saving mankind but preferred to triumph by justice, not power, because the Devil's power over man was not itself unjust. Justice was re-established and humanity was freed when the Devil acted unjustly in exacting death from the innocent Christ.[34] This offers a satisfactory explanation for God choosing not to save mankind by an exercise of divine power; it links justice with suffering love and humility; but the role of the divine in Christ's vindication of justice still needs to be explained.

---

[31] *Tr* 22.3–4 (Christmas 441); 40.3 (Lent 442); 54.4 (Palm Sun. 442); 55.3–4 (Wed. of Holy Week 442); 23.2 (Christmas 442); 56.1, 3 (Palm Sun. 443); 57.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 443); 70.3 (Good Fri. 443); 71.2 (Holy Sat. 443).
[32] *Tr* 22.3A.   [33] *Tr* 22.4.   [34] *De Trin* 13.10.13–13.15.19.

Leo was aware of the problem. Cassian's account of the Nestorian controversy and of Leporius had identified it. Nestorius, using exactly the same account of the human dilemma and the power of the Devil in his sermon against the Theotokos,[35] a sermon with which Leo must have been familiar, had assumed that the triumph of the humanity in Christ could only be authentic, a true assertion of justice, if the human were not assisted by the divine. He emphasised Christ's resisting temptation in the wilderness. If the second Adam were to reverse the sin of the first, he would have to have only the same strength as Adam before the Fall and not be helped by a hidden divine hand. Nestorius gave a remarkable speech to the human nature of Christ, pointing out to the Father how unjustly the Devil had acted. Leo was well aware of the dangers of that path. Nestorius' approach, he thought, led to the effective denial of Christ's divinity. Therefore, Leo did not want to divide the divine and human in Christ and present salvation as the triumph of unassisted sinless humanity; but could he offer a workable account of the coordination of the two natures? What role could he allot to Christ's divinity?

Augustine had also seen the problem. In that section of the *De Trinitate* where he outlined a soteriology of innocent justice triumphing over the Devil, he put forward his argument why Christ had to be both God and man. He had to be man in order to die; he had to be God to choose to die:

Would the Devil have been defeated by this most just right if Christ had willed to fight him with power and not with justice? He held back what he was able to do, however, so that he might first do what was fitting. For this reason it was necessary for him to be both man and God. Unless he were man, he could not have been killed; unless he were God, he would not have been believed not to have wanted what he was able to have done but not to have been able to do what he wanted; nor would we think that he preferred justice to power, but that he lacked the power. On the contrary, he suffered human things for us because he was man. But, had he not wanted, he would have been able not to suffer this because he was also God. His justice therefore was made more pleasing by his humiliation because the power of his divinity was so great that he would have been able not to suffer if he had not willed this humiliation. Thus, by the death of one so powerful,

---

[35] Sermon 9: Loofs, *Nestoriana*, 249–64.

justice was commended and power promised to us powerless mortals. He did the first of these two things by dying and the second by rising from the dead.[36]

Augustine appears to be struggling in this difficult passage. Its logic depends on, 'he would not have been believed,' and, 'his justice was made more pleasing.' Augustine is making two distinct soteriological claims here. The first depends on the implicit presumption that if Christ had been a perfect sinless man, a second Adam but not God, he might have been able to resist death but had he died people would have believed it was the inevitable sign of his powerlessness before the Devil. Therefore, the divinity of Christ serves largely to bolster people's faith in the free choice made by Christ in accepting death. Augustine could only have sustained this argument by a fuller consideration of what a perfect but non-divine Christ would have been like, and that of course was speculation that Augustine preferred to forego. The second claim is that the triumph of justice is all the greater when the power put aside in the free acceptance of death is all the greater. This is a much more significant statement. It offers a coherent alternative to Nestorius' view that if Christ's humanity were not acting independently of the divinity then there would be no true triumph of justice over the Devil's rights. For God to choose to die is a greater assertion of justice than the death of any sinless man.

It is likely that Leo absorbed the lessons of this section of the *De Trinitate* in the autumn of 441 and in one way improved on them. Augustine's first argument, that Christ had to be divine to avoid accusations that his death was involuntary, probably struck him as opaque. In the aftermath of Leporius and Nestorius, he ruled out any possibility of a sinless but non-divine man. Christ's sinlessness was of course a central part of Leo's soteriology but it is interesting to ask how he envisaged that Christ could be sinless. He regularly explained that Mary's virginity was the essential means by which he escaped the transmission of original sin;[37] this was a key part of his Christmas sermon for 441, stressed even more strongly in its revised version.[38]

---

[36] *De Trin* 13.14.18, *CC* 50A, 406–7.

[37] Armitage, 'A Marian Theme'; F. Spedalieri, 'La Madre del Salvatore nella Soteriologia di San Leone Magno,' *Marianum*, 25 (1963), 23–38 links the virgin birth with the restoration of justice.

[38] *Tr* 22.2–3, esp. 22.2–3B.

The following year, Leo described Christ as a victim who was a fellow of our race but an alien to our defilement (*nostri generis socia, et nostrae contaminationis esset aliena*).[39] The virginal conception of Christ, however, was not the cause of his sinlessness but only the means. It is striking that, when he talked about how the Devil was deceived about Christ into inflicting punishments and even death upon him, Leo made no distinction between the sinlessness of Christ and his divinity. This is most apparent, for instance, in the Christmas sermon of 441.[40] Leo regarded the innocence of Christ as the sign and effect of his divinity. He does not entertain the possibility that Christ could have been sinless in any other way. He was sinless because he was divine. He gets closest to stating this in his Palm Sunday sermon of 442:

The just and merciful God did not use in this way the right of his will to exercise only the power of his kindness for our restoration but because it was a consequence that man 'by sinning should become the slave of sin' [Jn 8.34], medicine was so dispensed to the sick, reconciliation to the guilty, redemption to captives, that the just sentence of condemnation might be released by the just work of a liberator. For if divinity alone stood out for sinners, not so much reason as power would have defeated the Devil. And again if mortal nature alone pleaded the cause of the fallen, what was not freed from the race would not have been divested of its condition. Whence it was necessary that into the one Lord Jesus Christ both the divine and human natures should come together so that through the Word made flesh both the origin of a new man and his passion should assist our mortality.[41]

Neither divinity alone nor mortal nature can win salvation. It can only be achieved by sinless nature, the *origo noui hominis*, which is itself only possible by the union of the divine and human natures. The unspoken logic underlying this is presumably that no man could have been born sinless unless he had been saved and no man could be saved without the assertion of divine justice in the death of a sinless man.

Here Leo is offering a much better argument than Augustine's: Christ had to be divine in order to be sinless, and he had to be sinless in order to triumph in justice. He said something like this in his Pentecost sermon of 442:

[39] *Tr* 23.3 (Christmas 442).   [40] *Tr* 22.4.   [41] *Tr* 56.1.

But because 'by the ill-will of the Devil death entered the world' [Wis 2.24] and captive humanity could not otherwise be released unless he took up our cause who, without loss of his majesty, would both become true man and alone not have the contagion of sin … [42]

It has to be God who takes up humanity's cause because as man he alone was free from the contagion of sin. What about the phrase 'without loss of his majesty'? Was that also soteriologically significant? Though Leo shows no sign of following Augustine's argument that Christ had to be God to avoid accusations that his death was involuntary, he does appear to agree with the force of Augustine's second argument for the necessity of Christ's divinity, that the justice of his death is all the greater since he was divine. This was an idea he was struggling to express in the spring of 442, as can be seen by comparing his account of the temptations in the wilderness in his sermon for Lent and his account of the crucifixion on the Wednesday of Holy Week.

His Lent sermon emphasised the separation of the divine and human, describing Christ tempted and suffering in the wilderness as man, being ministered to by angels as God:

when our Saviour, after a fast of forty days and nights, received the hunger of our weakness in himself, the Devil, having rejoiced to have found in him the sign of suffering and mortal nature, so as to test the power which he feared, asked 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' [Mt 4.3] The Almighty was certainly able to do it and it would be easy at the Creator's command for a creature of any kind to change into what form it might be ordered as, when he wished, at the wedding feast he changed the water into wine, but here it was more appropriate to his saving plans that the guile of the most evil enemy should be defeated not by the power of Deity but by the mystery of humility. Finally when the Devil had fled and all the arts of the cunning tempter had been broken, 'angels came to the Lord and ministered to him.' [Mt 4.11] May the sons and disciples of the Devil therefore be confounded who, filled with viperous inspiration, deceive any simple people, denying that in Christ each nature is true, whether they strip the Deity from the man or the man from the Deity, as at the one time each falsehood is destroyed with the twin evidence, because the perfect humanity is shown by the famine of the body and the manifest divinity is shown by the ministering angels. [43]

[42] *Tr* 77.2.   [43] *Tr* 40.3A.

Here, the divine is very firmly withholding its power and allowing the human to battle with the Devil. Leo draws from it the surprising conclusion that therefore both natures are manifest in Christ. The reason for this is that the last sentence, the humanity displayed in the hunger and the divinity displayed by the ministering angels, is drawn from an anti-Arian sermon of Gaudentius of Brescia which he repeated in the Tome.[44] Gaudentius wanted to safeguard the divinity by attributing suffering only to the humanity by a division of Christ's acts. When Leo revised the sermon about a decade later he recognised the limitations of this account. The changes he made are significant. He omitted the reference to the marriage feast of Cana, thereby lessening the force of the decision not to work a miracle in the wilderness, and he completely rewrote the last sentence so that the angels ministered to him: 'so that of the true man and of the true God, both the humanity would be inviolate in face of the scheming questions and the divinity manifest in the presence of the holy acts of obedience.'[45]

This is a considerably more satisfactory description of the relationship of the two natures. The angels minister to both natures so that the humanity remains inviolate and the divinity is made manifest in the presence of the obedient acts. The plural, obsequia, is very deliberate; Leo uses the word in the singular far more often than he uses the plural; it is intended not to express the virtue of obedience but the actions of Christ in the temptation. The double use of the preposition *apud* is highly suggestive: the relationship of the human nature to the assaults of the Devil is quite different from that of the divine to the holy acts of obedience; but the obedient acts are the response to the scheming questions. The *dolosas interrogationes* and the *sancta obsequia* sum up the whole episode of this scene in the wilderness; both natures are there in the one Christ; but each nature relates to the episode differently.

Five weeks later, on the Wednesday of Holy Week of 442, Leo preached a dramatic sermon on the crucifixion. He depicted the cross as the triumph of merciful justice and here the suffering of Christ is

---

[44] Gaudentius, *Tr* 19, *CSEL* 68, 166; Leo, *Ep* 28, TD 9 v111.

[45] *Tr* 40.3B: *ut ueri hominis et ueri Dei, et apud dolosas interrogationes inuiolata esset humanitas, et apud sancta obsequia manifesta diuinitas.*

the expression of God's love. Christ is crucified between two thieves, one saved and one condemned, just as he will judge the world separating the sheep from the goats. The repentant thief is saved by his faith just as the other is lost to blasphemy. The cross, intended to be an instrument of punishment, becomes for believers a step to glory from which Christ prays for forgiveness even for his persecutors.[46] The cross is an altar and through the saving victim the oblation of human nature is celebrated, the blood of the spotless lamb effacing the pact of the ancient transgression and abolishing the Devil's mastery.[47] Humility has triumphed over pride resulting in the marvellous and speedy transformation of the repentant thief who is crowned in paradise.[48] Judgment, forgiveness, sacrifice, the restoration of justice, and the triumph of humility are all presented as the work of God and man together in Christ. Nevertheless, Leo can still entertain a view of divine self-emptying in the sufferings of Christ that puts power and humility at odds. He introduces his account of the crucifixion with the words, 'when everything had been accomplished that the Divinity, restrained by the veil of flesh, permitted to happen';[49] and then, as he reaches the death of Christ, he announces, 'The mysteries of weakness have been accomplished; let the evidence of strength be produced.'[50] The first sign of divine power is the shocked reaction of the whole universe to the death of its Creator, the darkness and the earthquake, and the tombs bursting open.[51] Leo still has two ways of understanding the role of the divinity in Christ's sufferings, either asserting justice by allowing it to happen without an exercise of divine power or expressing divine love in the humble obedience of the suffering Christ.

The Mediation of the Divine into the Human

Instead of seeing a conflict between divine power and human vulnerability, which was effectively Nestorius' dilemma, Leo was moving

---

[46]　*Tr* 55.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 442).

[47]　As Rivière, 'La Rédemption chez saint Léon,' 184–6 observes, Leo subordinates the language of Christ's sacrifice to the theme of his innocent suffering restoring justice; he does not present it as the appeasement of God.

[48]　*Tr* 55.3.　　　[49]　*Tr* 55.1.　　　[50]　*Tr* 55.4.

[51]　*Tr* 55.4, *Tr* 57.4 (Wed. of Holy Week 443).

towards identifying the harmony between divine justice and human suffering in Christ. He was helped on the way by his other model, Christ the Mediator. For Leo, the two models converged. Christ has to be God and man to defeat the Devil in innocent suffering; as God and man he offers union with God and glorification to humanity. The union, rather than the separation of the natures, therefore became his predominant emphasis.

Leo developed his account of the mediation of the divine into the human by Christ over 441–3. In his Christmas sermon of 441, Leo described the relationship of the divine and human as though the divine had translated itself into the human, the human is the expression of the divine:

The Son of God enters these low regions of the world, descending from his heavenly throne but not receding from the Father's glory, in a new order, born with a new birth. In a new order because invisible in his own [nature], he was made visible in ours, incomprehensible he wished to be comprehended, remaining before time he began to be in time, the Lord of the universe, having covered the dignity of his majesty in shadow, takes up the form of a slave, the impassible God did not disdain to be a passible man and though immortal to subject himself to the laws of death.[52]

Leo preached the first version of the Lent sermon, describing the temptations of Christ, on 1 March 442. That he revised it so carefully a decade later is an interesting indication of his later awareness of its inadequacy, but even a month later, on 5 April, he presented a much more considered account of the relationship of the natures in his Palm Sunday sermon. Picking up themes he had already used in his Christmas sermon of 441, he delivered a long exposition of the relationship of the two natures. Each form does what is proper to it and neither is diminished by the other, yet each acts in communion with the other:

Beloved, in everything that pertains to the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Catholic faith has handed down and expects that we know that two natures have come together in our Redeemer and while its own properties remain so great a unity of the two natures came about that from that time when, as the cause of the human required, 'the Word was made flesh' in the

---

[52] *Tr* 22.2.

womb of the Virgin, it is not permitted to think of him as God without that which is man or man without that which is God. Each nature expresses its truth in distinct actions but neither separates itself from its connection with the other. Nothing is lacking from each other; all humility is in the majesty, all majesty in the humility; nor does the unity introduce confusion or the distinctiveness destroy the unity. One is passible, the other inviolable, yet his is the glory who also has degradation. It is the same one in weakness who is in strength, the same one capable of death who is the victor over death. God thus took on the whole man and bound himself to him and him to himself by reason of his mercy and power that each nature is in the other and neither crosses over from its own properties into the other.

2. But because the dispensation of the *sacramentum* ordained before the eternal ages for our restoration was not to be completed without human weakness or divine strength, each form does in communion with the other what is proper to it, namely the Word doing what belongs to the Word and the flesh carrying out what belongs to the flesh. One of them shines forth in miracles, the other succumbs to injuries. The one does not recede from equality with the Father's glory while the other does not relinquish the nature of our race. Nevertheless, even that acceptance of suffering has not been exposed to the condition of our humility in such a way that it is cut off from the power of the Divinity. Whatever mockery and disgrace, whatever harassment and punishment the rage of the wicked inflicted on the Lord, it was not tolerated out of necessity but by will. 'For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.' (Lk 19.10)[53]

Despite the ineptitude, in the second paragraph,[54] of apparently describing the two forms, the Word and the flesh, as separate principles of action in Christ, a sentence which was copied into his Tome to Flavian and was to arouse the ire of the Palestinian monks, this passage represents a significant achievement in Leo's soteriology. The Christological underpinning repeats what he had established the previous year in the first cycle of sermons. The Redeemer is presented as constituted of two natures; he is 'the same one' who is capable of dying as well as triumphing over death. Yet Leo makes it clear that Christ is not a compound of two natures; rather, the Word has become flesh, God has taken on the whole man. The original actor and true identity of Christ is the divine Word. All of this Leo could

---

[53] *Tr* 54.1–2.
[54] *Agit utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est, Verbo scilicet operante quod Verbi est, et carne exsequente quod carnis est.*

have written the year before. The year before, however, Leo had been unable to give any adequate account of why Christ had to be God to save the world. This sermon is a major advance in offering an answer.

The final sentence before the scriptural quotation expresses the essential point already touched on by Augustine: that Christ was not subjected to suffering out of the necessity of fallen nature but out of the graciousness of divine mercy. This freedom in choosing suffering makes the triumph of justice all the greater since the will that accepts suffering is the will of God: the acceptance of suffering is not cut off from the power of Divinity. Leo goes further. The sentence 'all the humility is in the majesty, all majesty in the humility' picks up the theme touched on in his Christmas sermon, that the divine is expressed in the human, that humility is not alien to majesty but rather humility is how divine majesty acts in a human life.

It is no accident that Leo incorporated both the passage from the Christmas sermon and this passage from the Palm Sunday sermon into the Tome. He believed they stated very satisfactorily why the Christ had to be one person in two natures, both majestic as God and suffering as man, one Christ living one reality in two ways, 'the same one in weakness who is in strength, the same one capable of death who is the victor over death.' This picture of Christ as the expression in a human life of the divine mercy would be effaced if either the duality of the divine and human or the unity of the human and divine were lost.

In the Palm Sunday sermon of 442, having laid down his account of the two natures working together in Christ, Leo then went on to consider the agony of Christ in Gethsemane. Here he could have repeated the emphasis of his Lent sermon on the distinction of the two natures, but he chose not to. Christ's fear is real: he trembled with our terror. This is a bold statement. There was a strong Latin tradition which maintained that Christ was not fearful for himself but for his disciples,[55] which usually floundered in interpreting his prayer for the chalice to pass from him.[56] Leo goes on to say that he

---

[55]   Hilary, *Cm Mt* 31.4–6, PL 9.1067–8, *De Trin* 10.36–7, *CC* 62A, 489–91, Ambrose, *Cm Lk* 10.58, 62, *CC* 14, 362–4, Jerome, *Cm Mt* 4.26.38–9, *CC* 77, 254–5.

[56]   Hilary suggests he wanted the chalice to pass from himself to his disciples but not pass him by, *Cm Mt* 31.7–8, PL 9.1068–9, but offers the opposite interpretation that he wanted them to be spared the chalice in *De Trin* 10.37, *CC* 62A, 490–1; Jerome

cured our weakness by participating in it and drove away the terror in the experience of suffering by undergoing it, an interpretation that perhaps owes something to Ambrose who saw Christ's participation in anguish as a saving act, though he interpreted what the anguish was differently,[57] but probably more to Augustine's homilies on John, where Christ's unwillingness to embrace death was depicted as natural but transfigured by being undergone by Christ.[58] Leo does not shrink from admitting the tension that this Gospel scene presents between the divine and human in Christ. If Christ was fearful, then his humanity knew the gulf between God and the terrors of the suffering world, but the point of the passage is that God heals the human by uniting himself with it.

This acknowledgement of conflict and resolution within Christ, albeit adumbrated only to a limited extent, is considerably more daring than most of his contemporaries. Cyril of Alexandria, for instance, in his brief commentary on Matthew, acknowledged that Christ was capable of suffering terrible things in his humanity but that this was put to sleep by the strength of the Word; his prayer revealed his humanity but the unbending divinity shone forth.[59] His somewhat longer commentary on Luke again acknowledged that Christ experienced fear as a human emotion but it was broken through by the power of the Word and translated to a better and more divine condition with the transformation of the nature;[60] fear is natural to man but by being made one with the Word is converted to courage.[61] Here, as is often the case with Cyril, Christ's humanity is passive, the field of operation of the Word, transformed by union with the divine. For Leo, however, the obedience of Christ's human will is a positive act of immense significance and salvific value.

Leo introduced this discussion of the agony in the garden by quoting 2 Cor 5.19: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.' It was a very apt text for in addressing a very difficult scene, riddled with Christological problems, Leo's main message is that

regarded it as the chalice of the Jews who had no excuse for ignorance, *Cm Mt* 4.26.39, *CC* 77, 255.

[57] *Cm Lk* 10.56–7, *CC* 14, 361–2; perhaps he was following Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 3.57.

[58] Augustine, *In Ioh Tr* 123.5, *CC* 36, 679–80.   [59] *Cm Mt*, PG 72.456B.

[60] *Cm Lk*, PG 72.921D.   [61] *Cm Lk*, PG 72.924B–C.

salvation is ultimately a divine task and there is no conflict between the divine and human in Christ. He therefore followed his consideration of Gethsemane with a description of Christ as a rich and merciful ambassador exchanging his state for ours, giving honours for insults, health for pain, life for death.[62] This passage was indebted to Augustine's commentary on Ps 30, encapsulating a major theme in Augustine's understanding of Christ as Mediator.[63] Leo is suggesting that divine mercy is mediated in human suffering, that divine love is expressed in Christ's humility. It relates closely to the theme of the re-assertion of divine justice because there too the exchange can be seen: accepting the suffering human condition and becoming the victim of injustice is the way the Son of God restores true justice and so bestows reconciliation and love.

In his Pentecost sermon for 442,[64] Leo puts a speech into the mouth of the risen and ascended Christ which is an explication of his words at the Last Supper, 'If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father.' [Jn 14.28]:

that is, if in perfect knowledge you saw what glory is conferred to you in this that begotten from God the Father I was also born from a human mother, that Lord of eternity I wanted to be one of the mortals, that invisible I presented myself as visible, that eternal in the 'form of God' I took up the 'form of a slave' [Phil 2.6–7], 'you would rejoice that I am going to the Father' [Jn 14.28]. For to you this ascension is offered, and your humility is lifted up above all the heavens to be placed at the right hand of the Father. But I, who am with the Father what the Father is, remain undivided with my begetter, and thus I do not leave him in coming to you, just as returning to him I do not abandon you. Rejoice therefore 'that I go to the Father because the Father is greater than I' [Jn 14.28]. I have united you to myself and I became the Son of Man so that you could become sons of God. Granted that I am one in both, however, in that in which I am conformed to you I am less than the Father, while in that in which I am not separated from the Father, I am greater even than myself. And so let the nature that is less than the Father go to the Father and let the flesh be there where the Word always is.[65]

    [62] *Tr* 54.4 (Palm Sun. 442).

    [63] *Enarr in Ps 30* 2.1.3, *CC* 38, 191–2; see S. Poque, 'Christus Mercator,' *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 48 (1960), 564–77.

    [64] *Tr* 77; Chavasse argues for this as the probable but not certain date of this sermon, *CC* 138, CLXXXIX–CXCI.

    [65] *Tr* 77.5.

The voice is that of Christ, both God and man, though the exigencies of Jn 14.28, 'the Father is greater than I', led Leo into the confusion of saying that in his divine nature he is greater than himself. Apart from that incautious slip, this is a very interesting passage. It starts with echoes of his Christmas sermon delivered five months before;[66] of the divine taking up the human and expressing himself in a human life (*praebui* is an interesting word to have chosen, with connotations of making available, exposing, or presenting the self). There is no hint here of conflict or improbable condescension. The corollary is that through this union with humanity, the Son of God has made it possible for people to become sons of God; it is their humility that is lifted up to the throne of God in his ascension. The whole emphasis of the passage is on union, with Christ as the mediator of the divine to humanity, raising up humanity to the divine.

As the 441–2 cycle drew to an end, Leo had made major advances in explaining the role of the divinity of Christ in salvation. He proposed two closely connected accounts. In one, the Devil was overcome by the meek acceptance of the suffering and death that he flung against Christ; these were the legitimate penalties of original sin but they were unjustly inflicted upon the sinless Christ; therefore justice was restored by the paradox of unjust suffering. Though sometimes Leo envisaged the divine role in this triumph of justice as a passive and permissive one, the view towards which he was moving was that the divine nature was expressing itself in Christ's innocence and humility. This is the bridge into the second account, which presented Christ as the mediator uniting God and man in himself, accepting human infirmity and giving divine love in return. Both accounts show Leo's indebtedness to Augustine.

The Divinity in the Passion

In the following year, 442–3, Leo seems to have redoubled his efforts to preach on the Passion. He chose to preserve the sermons he delivered that year not only on Palm Sunday and the Wednesday of Holy Week but on Good Friday and the Holy Saturday Vigil too. At the heart of all four sermons is the relationship of the divine and human

---

[66] *Tr* 22.2.

in the sufferings of Christ, the role of the divine nature in salvation. The Palm Sunday sermon set out the double threat of Jews and pagans: neither group should disturb the Christian people, making salvation seem impossible with respect to human beings or unworthy of God.[67] He picked up the contrast in the next section of the sermon, observing that the blindness of the Jews would not see the divine in Christ and the wisdom of the gentiles despises the human:

while the former are bringing calumnies against the glory of the Lord and the others are vaunting themselves against his humility, we adore the Son of God both in his strength and in our weaknesses; we are neither ashamed of the cross of Christ nor, among the tongues of slanderers, do we doubt his death or resurrection. Because what draws the proud to faithlessness directs us to faith and what is amongst them a matter of confusion is amongst us the cause of reverence.[68]

God is to be adored in weakness. This is a notable statement which marks an advance on his earlier admonition to the congregation not to blush at the cross of Christ, in his first Palm Sunday sermon in 441.[69] It was reinforced in his Good Friday sermon where he spoke about the seeming irrationality of the Virgin giving birth to the Creator of all natures and the Son of God who contains the universe being seized by a raging band:

But in all these things are at the same time the humility of man and the heavenliness of the Deity, nor does the reason of mercy obscure the majesty of the merciful, because through his ineffable power it has come about that while the true man is in the inviolable God and the true God is in passible flesh, glory is conferred upon man through contumely, incorruption through execution, life through death. For unless the 'Word became flesh' (Jn 1.14) and there existed such solid unity in both the natures that even a short time of death could not separate the one assumed from the one that assumed it, mortality would never have been able to return to eternity.[70]

This was the strongest statement that Leo had yet made that God was present, active, and to be seen in the humility of Christ and that the underlying structure of the union of the natures, so powerful that it withstood even death, allowed God to act in this way. The following day at the Holy Saturday vigil, he repeated his remark that not even

---

[67] *Tr* 56.1.   [68] *Tr* 56.2.   [69] *Tr* 52.3.   [70] *Tr* 70.3.

death could divide the natures and he made the striking observation that Christ lay in the tomb for a short three days as the Resurrection would not allow him to sleep long in death.[71]

On Holy Saturday night, he moved on to talk about the Resurrection. He observed that the risen Christ showed the wounds of the passion so that his disciples would understand that the properties of both natures were still in him, one and the same Son of God, Word, and flesh.[72] While the body became impassible, immortal and incorruptible, the Resurrection had not put an end to his flesh but changed it; the nature was not destroyed while its quality was transformed; he remains the same in essence but not in glory.[73] This is the fullest consideration that Leo had yet produced of the effect of the Resurrection on Christ's humanity. The flesh receives the divine characteristics of impassibility, immortality, and incorruptibility as it is glorified but Christ remains human. For this reason, he encourages the congregation to rejoice over being taken from earthly ignobility to heavenly dignity by the one who descended to our state to lift us to his.[74] The Resurrection, then, is the point at which the triumph of justice over the Devil is complete: death is swallowed up in victory. At the same time, the mediatorial work of Christ is most fully expressed: for himself, as the union of divine and human transfigures the flesh; for mankind, as human nature is taken up to the throne of God.

Given this grand attempt in the third cycle of sermons to show the interrelationship of both natures in Christ's saving work, it is interesting to look at Leo's handling of two of the scenes where he was most aware of the tension between the divine and the human—the agony in the garden and the arrest. As he approached his review of both events in the Palm Sunday sermon of 443, he insisted that both natures had to work together in the reaffirmation of justice over the Devil.[75] Having thus laid down his theological presuppositions, he tested them in the events of Gethsemane.

The Lord, having warned his disciples that they should battle against the force of temptation with the vigilant prayer of watchfulness, said in supplication, 'Father, if it is possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless,

---

[71] *Tr* 71.2; for a review of Leo's teaching on the role of Christ's Resurrection, see Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 103–17.
[72] *Tr* 71.3.   [73] *Tr* 71.4.   [74] *Tr* 71.2.   [75] *Tr* 56.1.

not as I will but as you will.' [Mt 26.39] The first petition is of weakness, the second of strength; the one he wanted from our [nature], the other he chose from his own, for the Son who is equal to the Father was not ignorant that everything is possible for God; nor had he descended to undertake the cross without his own will in this world, so that he would suffer this conflict of varied feelings with his reason somewhat perturbed. But so that there should be a clear distinction between the nature of the one who took it up and the one taken up, what was of man longed for divine power and what was of God looked for the human cause. The lower will gave way therefore to the higher[76]

This passage is plainly indebted to Augustine's sermons on John,[77] but its cleverness, going beyond Augustine, lies in the way Leo is playing with the theme of power and justice. Undergoing the cross is an act of justice not power, yet the willingness to undergo the cross is a choice made by power not weakness. This lies at the heart of Augustine's insight that the divine free choice to defeat the Devil by justice not power was all the greater an affirmation of justice.

On the other hand, Christ's human will longed for God to resolve the sins of the world by an act of power while the divine will chose to prosecute the cause of humanity in justice. The very tension between power and justice which is cardinal to his understanding of the dilemma of the fallen state of humanity is thus played out within Christ himself. Since Christ has undertaken not merely human nature but the condition of fallen humanity—a point he made a week later in his sermon for the Easter vigil[78]—he longed for a resolution to the sins of the world by the simple exercise of divine power. This was a very daring admission by Leo: that Christ's reason could be agitated, that he could desire something at variance with the deepest plans and therefore nature of God. Other commentators flinched from such a bold exposition of the text. Leo's literalism in reading scripture prompted him to take Jesus' prayer at face value, but he could only risk such an interpretation because he was so secure in his understanding of the union of divine and human in the one person of Christ. Nevertheless, the human will chose the path of weakness in obedience to the divine will. It was not constrained nor was it assisted

---

[76] *Tr* 56.2 (Palm Sun. 443).   [77] Augustine, *In Ioh, Tr* 52.3, *CC* 36, 446–7.
[78] *Tr* 71.2 (Holy Sat. Vigil 443).

to make that choice. Therefore Christ displays the union of the divine and human above all in his obedience.

Leo ended the Palm Sunday sermon and resumed on the Wednesday of Holy Week with a dramatic recital of the arrest. In a masterly piece of vivid prose, having set up a contrast between Judas and the crowd he led and Christ, Leo observed:

The Son of God permitted wicked hands to be laid on him and what the fury of the raging ones started was completed by the power of the suffering one. This was that '*sacramentum* of great holiness' [1 Tim 3.16] which Christ consecrated by his injuries. Had he driven his injuries away with open power and manifest strength, he would only have been exercising divine [power] not healing human [needs]. In all the things, however, which the popular and priestly insanity insolently and immoderately brought upon him, our sins were washed away, our offences expiated, because the nature, which in us was always guilty and captive, suffered innocent and free in him. To 'take away the sins of the world' that 'Lamb offered himself as a victim' [Heb 10.12; Jn 1.29]; his nature joined him to all bodily people and his spiritual origin distinguished him from them all.[79]

This is a very carefully considered passage. There is a pleasing paradox in talking of the power of the suffering one, the *patientis potestate*. Leo defines more clearly what cures the human condition, the *humana*: not an exercise or assertion of divine power but rather the suffering of his innocent and free human nature which can be couched in sacrificial language as the self-offering of the Lamb. The innocence and freedom, however, are the result of his spiritual origin. He is sinless because he is divine. He can save humanity because he shares a nature, *substantia*, with all bodily people. What happens to him saves humanity because he is human. Christ therefore has to be both God and man to save humanity; the triumph of justice in innocent suffering is also a divine act.

Despite his remark three days later, when he started his sermon in the middle of the arrest, that he curtailed his power, *cohibuit potestatem*,[80] it is noticeable that in this account of the arrest he does not return to the text of Jn 18.4–5 which he had used in his first Palm Sunday sermon in 441.[81] The Fourth Gospel's description of the armed band falling down at Christ's words, 'I am he,' offered just the

---

[79] *Tr* 56.3.   [80] *Tr* 57.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 443).   [81] *Tr* 52.3.

evidence that Leo did not need here of the power that was curtailed. That is not now his primary emphasis.

Leo therefore handled these two scenes in Gethsemane with some considerable skill to illustrate the observation early in the Palm Sunday sermon that: 'So it was necessary that both divine and human natures should come together into the one Lord Jesus Christ, so that through the Word made flesh both the origin of a new man and his suffering should come to the aid of our mortality.'[82] The origin of the new man is the work of the divinity in the flesh—only by a divine act could a new man be conceived sinless and free. Thus the passion is also a work of the divinity in the flesh as it is the supreme expression of that freedom and its achievement, as the triumph of justice, depends on his sinlessness. The human nature is thus the special creation of the divine but in its freedom it echoes and cooperates with the divine.

Leo had ended his first cycle of sermons with a number of undeveloped and unresolved areas in his theology: the role of the crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension in salvation and more fundamentally the role of Christ's divinity in his saving work. The chief aim of the second cycle had been to establish the way the divine and human natures of Christ worked together in his two favourite soteriological models, Christ the Mediator and Christ the innocent restorer of justice. By the end of his third cycle of sermons, Leo had demonstrated considerable confidence in articulating a view of salvation based firmly in his Christology of one person in two natures.

The Holy Spirit and the Appropriation of Salvation in the Second and Third Cycles, 441–3

As Leo strove to bring his two soteriological models together, he faced a further tension between the two accounts. The first account, the overturning of the Devil's rights, described what had been accomplished; the second, union with God in a glorified life, what was promised. The road to appropriating both freedom from the Devil

---

[82] *Tr* 56.1.

and exaltation to glory was the same one, but the Devil's rights had been irrevocably broken while glory lay ahead in heaven. The road to glory was a journey of greater freedom from the Devil, a journey that imitated Christ's own and that could only be made in communion with him.

For Leo, Christ is an individual man but at the same time the representative of all humanity, bearing universal human nature. When, therefore, the Devil oversteps the limits of his not unjust claims over humanity in demanding Christ's death, the Devil's claims over all humanity are forfeited. This liberation from sin has, in principle, happened to all humanity. When Christ rises from the dead and ascends into heaven so too, in principle, has all humanity been lifted up. But freedom and glory can only be appropriated by incorporation into the risen and glorified Christ.

Through the Incarnation, people are given power to return to their maker and become children of their Father.[83] Released from the Devil's power in principle,[84] people must become free by baptism and the Christian life—above all the triple path of prayer, almsgiving and fasting.[85] Almsgiving especially wipes away post-baptismal sin[86] and the observance of true religion crushes the unclean spirits.[87] People should therefore fasten the movements of their harmful will to the Cross, as the Lord's Passion is drawn out to the end of the world,[88] for they must incorporate the Paschal Mystery into themselves and become companions of Christ's Resurrection.[89] This was the theological underpinning of the civic Christianity to the propagation of which he devoted so much energy. He repeatedly stressed the need for harmony between the different classes of society, exhorting the more affluent to be generous to the poor and the poor to be generous as far as their resources allowed.[90] He reminded his congregation of the Emperor's clemency in Lent and encouraged them to imitate his amnesty towards many wrong-doers.[91] He reminded them of the

---

[83] *Tr* 22.5 (Christmas 441).

[84] The plundered enemy rages for having lost his ancient rights, *Tr* 40.2 (Lent 442).

[85] *Tr* 15.1 (Dec. Fast 442).   [86] *Tr* 7 (Nov. Collection 441).

[87] *Tr* 8.1 (Nov. Collection 442).   [88] *Tr* 70.4–5 (Good Fri. 443).

[89] *Tr* 71.1 (Holy Sat. 443).

[90] *Tr* 14.2 (Dec. Fast 441), 87.3 (Sep. Fast 442), 8.2 (Nov. Collections 442), 15.2 (Dec. Fast 442).

[91] *Tr* 40.5 (Lent 442).

universal love of God and encouraged them to behave likewise.[92] He claimed that the whole populace fasted and prayed more powerfully united as one community than as isolated individuals and spoke enthusiastically of both sexes and all grades and orders of society combining as the whole people of Christ in the same duties.[93] It was becoming clear, however, that he felt that residual paganism was still a real threat to the Christianisation of the city: he talked about pagans celebrating the winter solstice rather than Christmas,[94] and warned people to see that life was not controlled by the movement of the stars but the power of God.[95] He told his congregation not to be disturbed by either Jews or pagans.[96] That his efforts to unite the Christian community around him as their orator bishop and to shape their view of the history of the city were not wholly successful can be seen from his sermon commemorating Alaric's sack of Rome, delivered in the summer of 442, when he delivered an unusual attack on his congregation and lamented the small numbers who had turned out to give thanks for the city's deliverance, complaining that more effort is spent on demons than on the Apostles and that the entertainments in the circus draw bigger crowds than the shrines of the martyrs.[97]

All of this was the attainment of what had been achieved—the experience of freedom from sin. But it pointed towards what lay ahead, where Christ had gone before, the achievement of glory. In the Pasch, they are adopted into the family of the patriarchs and into their home the devastating angel does not penetrate;[98] Christ is the body, they are his members;[99] they are the members of the body of which Christ is the head.[100] This is the work of the Spirit: Leo cites Gal 4.6, the Spirit sent into the hearts of believers to cry out, 'Abba, Father,' at Pentecost 442;[101] and 1 Cor 12.4–6 about varieties of gifts but one Spirit and one Lord at Pentecost 443.[102]

Incorporation culminates in glorification which again has been made available in principle in Christ's own elevation. The speech

---

[92] *Tr* 41.3 (Lent 443).　　　[93] *Tr* 88.4 (Sept. Fast 443).

[94] *Tr* 22.6 (Christmas 441).

[95] *Tr* 84.2 (Commemoration of Alaric's invasion 442), 57.4 (Wed. of Holy Week 443).

[96] *Tr* 56.1 (Palm Sun. 443).　　　[97] *Tr* 84.

[98] *Tr* 55.5 (Wed. of Holy Week 442).　　　[99] *Tr* 23.5 (Christmas 442).

[100] *Tr* 32.4 (Epiphany 442).　　　[101] *Tr* 77.2.　　　[102] *Tr* 75.4.

that Leo puts into the mouth of the ascended Christ in his Pentecost sermon of 442 reminds the congregation that their lowliness has been raised in Christ above all the heavens and placed at the right hand of the Father, as he became the Son of Man so that they might become sons of God.[103] These ideas receive their fullest expression in the Holy Week sermons of 443. On Wednesday, describing the crucifixion, he explained Jesus' words in Jn 12.32, 'When I have been lifted up, I shall draw all to myself': 'that is, I will undertake the whole cause of the human race and I shall recall into wholeness the nature once lost. In me, all weakness will be abolished; in me all wounds will be healed.'[104] On Holy Saturday, speaking now of the Resurrection, Leo observed that Christ had descended to our state, taking not simply human nature but the human condition, to lift us up to his; therefore the congregation should rejoice over the transformation by which they are taken from earthly ignobility to heavenly dignity.[105] Having described Christ's risen state, he then saw in him the shape of future hope: 'rejoicing in the exaltation of our nature, we hold fast now to what we believe.'[106] He can therefore quote 2 Cor 5.17 and see in his congregation the people of God as a new creature in Christ.[107]

Leo therefore offers a soteriology of solidarity with Christ: Christ has united himself with all humanity by taking on human nature and now all humanity has the opportunity to become incorporated into his glory. One major area that remained undeveloped in his first year of preaching was the role of the Holy Spirit in this work of incorporation. Leo made a very important attempt to fill that gap in his Pentecost sermon for 442.[108] It is an ambitious review of Trinitarian theology. Having laid down that there is one divine mercy and one application of justice and no division of action where there is one divine will, Leo then describes the different roles the three persons of the Trinity play in the divine economy of salvation. First he distinguishes the persons: the one sent, the one sending, and the one who promises.[109] So the first role he ascribes to the Spirit is

---

[103] *Tr* 77.5.   [104] *Tr* 57.4.   [105] *Tr* 71.2.
[106] *Tr* 71.4.   [107] *Tr* 71.6.
[108] *Tr* 77; though the date of this sermon is open to dispute, Chavasse believes it was probably preached on Pentecost Sun., 31 May 442: *CC* 138, CLXXXIX–CXCI.
[109] *Tr* 77.1: *cumque alia sit persona missi, alia mittentis, alia promittentis, simul nobis et unitas manifestatur et Trinitas.*

therefore embedded in the salvation history, above all in the Resurrection and Ascension: at the end of Luke's Gospel, as Christ ascends to heaven, he sends the promise of his Father upon the disciples,[110] while in Acts Jesus is described as raised up and exalted and having received from the Father the promise of the Spirit and then pouring out what the crowd has seen and heard at Pentecost.[111] Paul refers to receiving the promise of the Spirit[112] and being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,[113] which became a key text associated with baptism. Leo is summing up the work of the Spirit in the glorification of Christ and the furtherance of his presence in this one word *promittentis*.

He then offers a second triad of functions: the Father is propitiated, the Son propitiates, the Spirit inflames.[114] There is an implicit reference here to the Spirit providing the fire of sacrifice, perhaps an allusion to the fire carried by Abraham to Mount Moriah,[115] and therefore making of the atonement a Trinitarian act, but it is now believers whom the Spirit inflames. He explains what he means by the Spirit's role:

It was necessary that they should also do something towards salvation for themselves, and with their hearts having been turned to the Redeemer, they should cut themselves off from the power of the enemy because, as the apostle said, 'God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, "Abba, Father"' [Gal 4.6]; 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' [2 Cor 3.17]; and 'no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit' [1 Cor 12.3][116]

This is a very economical account of the Spirit's work incorporating believers into Christ, adopting them into the sonship of the Father, giving them the faith to accept the identity of Christ as Lord and thereby bestowing upon them freedom. For the most part, his view of the action of the Spirit is ecclesial and practical, elaborated in the Pentecost sermon he delivered the following year, 443: the strength of the Spirit's teaching makes fasts and almsgiving a means of cleansing for the community;[117] it is from him that people can appeal to the Father, shed tears of penitence, and utter groans of supplication;[118]

---

[110] Lk 22.49.   [111] Acts 2.33.   [112] Gal 3.14.   [113] Eph 1.13.
[114] *Tr* 77.2: *Pater propitiaretur, Filius propitiaret, Spiritus sanctus igniret.*
[115] Gen 22.6–7.   [116] *Tr* 77.2.   [117] *Tr* 75.5.   [118] *Tr* 75.4.

the Spirit sanctifies the Church and instructs every rational soul as the inspirer of faith, the teacher of knowledge, the source of love, the sign of chastity, the principle of all virtue.[119] Unfortunately Leo does not develop these significant insights in a thoroughly Trinitarian framework. To focus on the Spirit, Leo seems to have needed the prompting afforded by the feast of Pentecost and there are few references to the Spirit in the other feasts or fasts of the year. He never reaches the rich understanding of the Holy Spirit of Cyril of Alexandria but he was no more limited than Augustine.[120]

Preaching against the Manichees: 443–4

In the autumn of 443, a conclave of Manichees was uncovered in Rome.[121] Leo presided over a trial in the presence of bishops, priests, and the entire senate[122]—presumably in one of his basilicas—and exposed their perverse immoralities which he then publicised.[123] No pope had dominated the city like this before. It was an unparalleled demonstration of Leo's political and judicial ascendancy in Rome, the sole event recorded for the year by Prosper in his history.[124] As late as 449, Theodoret of Cyrus praised it as one of Leo's greatest achievements.[125] Anyone whose memory stretched back twenty-five years, as did Leo's, might have marvelled at how far the prestige of

[119] *Tr* 75.5.

[120] D. Keating, *The Appropriation*, 251–88 draws out the similarities between the Christologies and soteriologies of Cyril and Leo, though he exaggerates the extent to which Leo's account of salvation could be described as divinisation.

[121] Jalland, *The Life and Times of St Leo the Great*, 43–50; A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 2, part 1, 172–94 reviews the theology of Manichaeism and Leo's view of it; H.O. Maier, '"Manichee!": Leo the Great and the Orthodox Panopticon,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 441–60 is a sociological study; for the Roman and legal context of Leo's actions see S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen, 1992), 204–7.

[122] *Tr* 16.4: *Residentibus itaque mecum episcopis atque presbyteris, et in eumdem concessum christianis uiris et nobilibus congregatis . . .*; Valentinian, 'III Novella 18: *in iudicio beatissimi papae Leonis coram senatu amplissimo*,' in T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (eds.), *Theodosiani Libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum Pertinentes*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1905), vol 2, 104.

[123] *Tr* 16.4 (12 Dec. 443), *Ep* 7.1, PL 54.620–1 (30 Jan. 444).

[124] Prosper, *Chron* sa 443, *MGH*, Chron Min 1, 479.

[125] *Inter Epp Leon* 52.2, PL 54.847.

the papal court had been restored after the debacles of the reign of Zosimus and the schism after his death. Leo's doctrinal objections to their teaching were reinforced by revulsion at their sexual immorality and fear of their secretiveness. He preached against Manichaeism repeatedly over the course of the year and stirred up the bishops of Italy to take action against them.[126] When Leo secured an imperial constitution confirming his actions and renewing old decrees against them, his triumph was complete.[127]

They must have been discovered in October: he made no reference to them in his accession sermon on 29 September 443[128] but spoke about them in his sermon for the November collection as though their existence was already well known to his congregation.[129] He described the trial, which had clearly only very recently been held, in his Ember Days sermon on 12 December 443.[130] Throughout late November, December, and January, he repeatedly urged the congregation to denounce the Manichaeans and avoid their company, finally urging them to pray for their rehabilitation.[131] He warned them against the spurious appeal of the chastity, devotion, and especially the fasts of the Manichaeans.[132] From the outset, he presented their beliefs as wholly destructive of Christian orthodoxy:[133] they do not accept the Law of Moses which shows God is the creator of the universe; they gainsay the prophets and the Holy Spirit, suppressing the psalms that are chanted in churches throughout the world; they deny the birth of Christ in the flesh and therefore regard his passion and Resurrection as merely appearances; they strip all grace from the baptism of regeneration.[134] When the trial had exposed the carefully planned abuse of a ten-year-old girl, which he admitted was scarcely credible, his language became uncharacteristically violent, describing them as the amalgamation of every error, of the profanity

---

[126]　*Ep* 7.2, PL 54.621–2.

[127]　Valentinian III, 'Novella 18,' 19 Jun. 445, Mommsen and Meyer, *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, 103–5.

[128]　*Tr* 3.　　　[129]　*Tr* 9.4.　　　[130]　*Tr* 16.4.

[131]　*Tr* 9.4, *Tr* 16.5–6, *Tr* 34.5 (6 Jan 444).　　　[132]　*Tr* 24.6 (25 Dec. 443), 34.5.

[133]　A. Lauras, 'Saint Léon le Grand et le Manichéisme Romain,' *Studia Patristica*, 11 (1972), 203–9, has shown that Leo was familiar with some of Augustine's anti-Manichaean writings but that he uses different scriptural texts and ignores several of Augustine's arguments.

[134]　*Tr* 9.4.

of the pagans, the blindness of the Jews, the illicitness of occult magic, all flooding together into one sewer. He listed the heretics whom the Devil had used to deceive the world—Basilides, Marcion, Sabellius, Photinus, Arius, Eunomius—and described them as the worst of all.[135] Just under a fortnight later, on Christmas Day 443, he offered another list of heretics—Arius, Macedonius, Photinus, Apollinaris—this time with the striking observation that there was some element of truth in each one's teaching, which he proceeded to illustrate, but that there was no truth to be found in Manichaeism.[136] He denounced their adulteration of scripture, adding some books and subtracting others from the canon, and their worship of Christ in the sun and the moon and of Mani as the Holy Spirit.[137] In his sermon for Lent 444, he attacked the underpinning of their fasts—their view that creation is evil—and their practice of fasting on Sundays and Mondays in honour of the stars, to the manifest dishonour of the risen Christ. He observed that they sometimes communicated, receiving only the Body of Christ but steadfastly refusing to drink the 'blood of our redemption'—suggesting that the congregation keep out a sharp eye for that practice as clearly he still feared that not all the Manichaeans had been discovered.[138] He devoted a significant part of his Pentecost sermon to denouncing the idea that Mani was the embodiment of the Holy Spirit[139] and still felt it necessary to warn his congregation not to believe their teaching.[140] It seems likely that his unusual attack on Jewish processions and fasts in his September Fast sermon was sharpened by his earlier denunciations of Manichaean fasts.[141]

Much of Leo's preaching in the course of the year was a direct response to Manichaeism. His first aim was to secure the integrity and identity of the Church. Immediately after his description of the Manichaeans' errors in his Christmas sermon of 443, he launched into his regular eulogy of his congregation as a royal priesthood,[142] a description of the Christian community all the more eloquent as he contrasted them with the heretical sect whom he had denounced as tools of the Devil. This probably inspired a remarkable passage earlier in the sermon in which he said that the waters of baptism are an image

---

[135] *Tr* 16.3.   [136] *Tr* 24.5.   [137] *Tr* 34.4.   [138] *Tr* 42.4–5.
[139] *Tr* 76.6–8.   [140] *Tr* 76.8.   [141] *Tr* 89.1.   [142] *Tr* 24.6.

of the Virgin's womb: the same Holy Spirit fills the font who also filled the Virgin, taking away the same sin by mystical washing which was absent in the sacred conception.[143] In one sentence, he established the connection between baptism and the Incarnation as the common work of the Holy Spirit—a response to the Manichaean undermining of the nature of the Church, of the regeneration of baptism, and of the identity of the Holy Spirit. In his Palm Sunday sermon, he made an unusual, perhaps unique, reference to the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, presumably as a response to the Manichaean practice of refraining from drinking from the chalice to which he had alerted his congregation just over a month before.[144] In direct rebuttal of the Manichaeans, he was careful in his Lent sermon to contrast the serpent tempting human beings to take forbidden things and the discipline of the fast avoiding permitted things,[145] while his striking words in the September Fast sermon about the gentleness of Christian fasting contrasted with Jewish fasts was probably an oblique response to Manichaeism.[146]

Leo clearly found all of these ideas alarming but none as immediately dangerous as the Manichaeans' denial of the humanity of Christ. When they were first discovered, he pointed out that they denied the birth of Christ according to the flesh and claimed that the passion and Resurrection were merely appearances. He returned to this in his Christmas sermon, where he observed before everything else that they denied that Christ was physically born of the Virgin and therefore did not believe in his passion and Resurrection.[147] Twelve days later, he expanded on this and said that they attributed a false body to Christ, the empty image of pretended flesh, because they feared that incarnation would be a defilement.[148]

Leo's second aim was therefore to defend the humanity of Christ. When he came to describe the Passion in his sermon for the Wednesday of Holy Week 444, he stressed the physical suffering of Christ in a way he had not previously done. He described Jesus presented to Pilate bound with ropes, beaten with repeated stripes and blows, stained with spittle, condemned by the shouting,[149] and then later described how Pilate allowed him to be humiliated with

[143] *Tr* 24.3.   [144] *Tr* 58.3.   [145] *Tr* 42.4.   [146] *Tr* 89.1–2.
[147] *Tr* 24.4.   [148] *Tr* 34.4.   [149] *Tr* 59.2.

much derision, harassed by innumerable troubles, and then presented him to his persecutors beaten with whips, crowned with thorns, and clothed in the garment of mockery.[150] Leo had never painted such a vivid picture of the tortured and humiliated Christ before. He had decided to attack the Manichaean denial of the passion directly:

Since the blindness of the unhappy Jews denied that the Lord of the universe was their king, the Lord Jesus was handed over to the will of savage people and in derision of his royal dignity was ordered to carry his own cross because it was obvious that he whose 'glory was turned to ignominy' [Hos 4.7] was worthy of this opprobrium. He was therefore in the eyes of the wicked a great mockery, but was revealed to the faithful as a great mystery, because the most glorious victor over the Devil and most powerful conqueror of hostile spirits, in a beautiful spectacle, carried the trophy of his triumph and bore on the shoulders of his undefeated patience the sign of salvation to be adored by all kingdoms.[151]

This densely paradoxical passage implicitly attacks the Manichaeans who seek to eliminate the entire paradox of the cross by denying its reality. Leo calls it a beautiful spectacle: the king carries a cross as an instrument of punishment and rightly because it is his trophy of victory; the cross that the blind Jews think is opprobrium will be adored by all the kingdoms; the one who is in the eyes of the wicked a great mockery was revealed to the faithful as a great mystery. That last clause was a direct quotation from Augustine's homilies on John:[152] a work he had already cited in his first Palm Sunday sermon[153] and which he would quote again in his Pentecost sermon for 444.[154] In the revised edition of the sermon, Leo added a further touch that would warn any reader against Manichaean error; by citing Is 9.6, a son is born for us whose dominion is upon his shoulders, he made an allusion to the nativity and linked the humanity of Christ in birth and death. Leo's enormous stress here on the humanity of Christ is matched by his equal emphasis on his divinity. Later in the sermon, Leo encourages his congregation not to let their minds see what the wicked saw; they should see the glory of the cross shining in heaven

---

[150] *Tr* 59.3. [151] *Tr* 59.4. [152] Augustine, *In Ioh, Tr* 117.3, *CC* 36, 652.
[153] *Tr* 52.3. [154] *Tr* 76.2.

and on earth.[155] Christ accepted, by being born, the death that his divine nature could not undergo.[156]

In addition to this striking emphasis on Christ's suffering humanity, Leo came back repeatedly in the course of the year to the elevation of human nature in Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. He prepared the way with a striking opening to his Christmas sermon where he gave a fuller statement of what he had said before, that in the Incarnation the Word took on the nature of all humanity and so in him all humanity was, in principle, lifted up into unity with God:

in Christ, mercy itself came down to sinners, truth itself to the straying, life itself to the dead, so that the Word, coeternal and equal to his begetter, might take up the nature of our lowliness into the unity of his divinity, and God born of God might, the same one, also be born man from man.[157]

He returned to the question of how those already taken up into the unity of the Godhead in principle might find glorification in practice in the sermons for the Pasch, which he described in his Good Friday sermon as the *transitus* of human nature.[158] That same sermon contained another description of how the invisible had made himself visible in Christ, the eternal temporal, the impassible passible; he linked this with the idea of Christ taking on universal human nature, encouraging his congregation to love their own nature in him.[159] Self-emptying was both a translation of the divine into the human and the creation of a new union of the divine and human. It was this common humanity that could now be glorified in Christ. Though he did not preserve a sermon for the Holy Saturday vigil,[160] he added a new feast to his published list, the Ascension,[161] where he developed more fully themes touched on in the Pentecost sermon of two years before.[162] This was by far his fullest statement of the elevation of all humanity

---

[155] *Tr* 59.6.   [156] *Tr* 59.8.   [157] *Tr* 24.1.   [158] *Tr* 72.6.
[159] *Tr* 72.5.
[160] There are in fact only two in his entire corpus, *Tr* 71 (443) and 69 (454); both were important—the first at the climax of his first major attempt to show the relationship of divine and human in Christ's saving work, the second to reassert that relationship in the aftermath of the controversy provoked by the Palestinian reaction to Chalcedon; it seems likely that Leo seldom preached at length at the vigil for practical reasons.
[161] *Tr* 73; for a review of Leo's teaching on the role of Christ's Ascension, see Armitage, *A Twofold Solidarity*, 119–34.
[162] *Tr* 77.5.

in the glorification of Christ, the basis of the hope of all incorporated into Christ that they might share in his glory:

And indeed it was a great and indescribable cause of rejoicing when, in the sight of the sacred multitude, the nature of the human race ascended above the dignity of all the creatures of heaven to pass above the angelic orders and to be elevated beyond the heights of the archangels, not to dwell in a limitation of its ascent in any sublime places until, received seated with the eternal Father, it was associated on the throne of his glory to whose nature it was joined in the Son. Therefore, since Christ's ascension is our elevation and where the glory of the head proceeds there also the hope of the body is called, let us rejoice, beloved, with worthy joy and let us be glad with reverent thanksgiving. For today we are not only confirmed as possessors of paradise but we have even penetrated the heights of heaven in Christ, made more fully ready through the indescribable grace of Christ which we had lost through the 'Devil's malice'. [Wis 2.24] For those whom the virulent enemy threw down from the felicity of our first dwelling the Son of God has placed together, incorporated with himself, at the right hand of the Father.[163]

The description of the ascent above the angels is not unlike Ambrose's account of the Ascension in the *De Fide*,[164] but where Ambrose's aim was to demonstrate Christ's divinity, Leo's was to underline his humanity and the hope of all humanity in him. The raising up of all humanity in Christ to the Father's right hand closely follows a passage in Augustine's homilies on John.[165] Elevation to the heights of the Father's glory is achieved in union with Christ; the universal human nature that Christ had assumed has ascended and thus in principle all humanity has ascended with him. Yet where the head has proceeded, the hope of the body is called: what has been achieved in Christ must be appropriated by believers. Leo missed his opportunity to develop that idea in his Pentecost sermon delivered ten days later which was largely devoted to another exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity and an attack on the claim that Mani was the Holy Spirit. He observed that only someone denying the bodily ascension of Christ could say that, for 'the Ascension of the Lord was the cause of the giving of the Spirit';[166] but Augustine's account of the relationship

---

[163] *Tr* 73.4.   [164] Ambrose, *De Fide* 4.1.5–14, *CSEL* 78, 159–62.
[165] Augustine *In Ioh, Tr* 78.3, *CC* 36, 524–5.
[166] *Tr* 76.8: *Domini ascensio dandi Spiritus fuit ratio.*

between the Ascension and the gift of the Spirit was equally unsatisfactory.[167]

His observation that we had been made not only possessors of paradise but that our nature had penetrated the heights of the heavens is significant. He appears to be contrasting the restored condition of paradise with the heights of heaven. Paradise, as he had observed in his Christmas sermon of 441[168] and in his December fast sermon of 443,[169] was the blessed state that had been lost in the Fall. The *caelorum superna* clearly go beyond that.[170] It seems then that this expresses two stages of reconciliation with God—first, freedom from the power of the Devil, the forgiveness of sins, paradise; and secondly, glorification and union with the Father in Christ. These two stages correspond to his two soteriological models, overthrowing the Devil's rights and the mediation of divine glory. The first stage is achieved on the cross: Leo regularly highlighted Christ's forgiveness of the thief and his promise that they would be together in paradise.[171] The second stage is accomplished in the Ascension.

Leo was thus reaching a clearer recognition that the glorification of human nature far exceeded its restoration to the condition of Adam. In this year's preaching, Leo for the first time noted repeatedly that glorification went beyond the condition of Eden. He noted in his Christmas sermon of 443 that the Lord gave much to the creation of humanity, but spent far more on its restoration.[172] On Good Friday 444, he remarked that God wanted to help humanity in such a way that the restoration should not be outside human nature and that the second condition should advance beyond that of the first; 'happy is someone who has not fallen away from what God has made but happier still the one who remains in what God has remade.'[173] He echoed those words in his Ascension sermon when describing the disciples recognising the risen Christ in the breaking of bread, who were much happier when their eyes were opened and they saw the glorification of

[167] Augustine, *In Ioh, Tr* 94.4–5, *CC* 36, 563–4.
[168] *Tr* 22.5.   [169] *Tr* 16.5.
[170] This is not a distinction made by Augustine, e.g. *In Ioh, Tr* 111.2, *CC* 36, 629–30.
[171] *Tr* 53.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 441), 55.3 (Wed. of Holy Week 442), 61.5 (Wed. of Holy Week 445).
[172] *Tr* 24.2.
[173] *Tr* 72.2: *Felix si ab eo non decideret quod Deus fecit, sed felicior si in eo maneat quod refecit.*

his nature than the first parents on whom the confusion of their own lies was inflicted.[174]

Leo's response to the challenge of Manichaeism therefore led him not only to face more fully the reality of Christ's human sufferings, it also prompted him to speak more fully about the glorified state of risen humanity in the ascended Christ and in doing so to sharpen the distinction that had previously been implicit between the two stages of salvation. It also prompted him, perhaps in compensation for these emphases on Christ's humanity and the destiny of human nature in him, to define afresh the unity of the divine and human in Christ.

Leo had already used the Augustinian term *persona* in his first Christmas sermon[175] but had never used it again until Good Friday 444 where he needed to stress that while the divine nature took up human nature it was in no way diminished by the union. Leo put both the soteriological models together:

For the whole human race having fallen in the first parents, the merciful God wished to come to the help of the creature 'made in his image' [Gen 1.27] through his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ so that the reparation of the nature should not be outside the nature and the second condition should advance beyond the dignity of its own origin. Happy that which God made if it did not fall away from him, but happier that which he has remade if it remains in him. It was a great thing to have received the form from Christ but greater to have the reality [*substantiam*] in Christ. For that nature assumed us into its own proper character which bent down into the measures of kindness which it chose, but it did not incur any change of mutability. That nature assumed us which neither destroyed its own properties in ours nor ours in its own, which thus made in itself one person of divinity and humanity so that under the dispensation of weaknesses and strengths neither should the flesh be able to be inviolable through the divinity nor the divinity passible through the flesh. That nature assumed us which did not break off the branch from the common stock of our race and yet which excluded the contagion of sin that passes into all men. Certainly, weakness and mortality, which were not sin but the penalty of sin, were taken on by the redeemer of the world as punishment that they might be paid as the price. What was therefore transfused in all men as damnation is in Christ the '*sacramentum* of holiness.' [1 Tim 3.16] For free of debt he offered himself to the cruellest debt collector and submitted himself to the hands of the Jews as the Devil's servants in the

---

[174] *Tr* 73.2.   [175] *Tr* 21.2.

crucifixion of sinless flesh. Which [flesh] he wanted to be dead until his most speedy resurrection so that for believers in him neither should persecution be insuperable nor death terrible since [our] participation in [his] glory should not be doubted as [his] communion in [our] nature was not to be doubted.[176]

The reappearance of the word *persona* just as Leo attempts a fusion of the two models, of mediation and the reassertion of justice, is very striking. In his account of glorification, in which humanity is lifted to a condition that surpasses its original blessedness, where the original form from Christ is now superseded by the reality in Christ, where we participate in his glory as he has shared in our nature, it is the divine which takes up the human. Clearly, at this point, Leo's concern is to defend the integrity of Christ's two natures in this mediatorial relationship. Three sentences begin with *suscepit nos illa natura*. In each case, Christ's human nature is identified with all humanity, *nos*. Each sentence proceeds to clarify the effect of the union. The first two insist at length that neither the divine nor the human was destroyed. The third however defines the effect of the union in Christ as separating the human from the contagion of sin: Christ's sinlessness was the result of the divine assuming humanity in him. This opens the way to his account of the second model, the sinless Christ paying the price to the debt collector. Here the danger that Leo addresses is the opposite, that the two natures act separately. Therefore Leo needs to express the unconfused union of the natures in Christ and thus he finds his way back to *persona*.

It is perhaps even more striking that the two terms Leo had already used in earlier sermons, *sacramentum* and *exemplum*, are brought together here for the first time. *Sacramentum* is a divine saving act; *exemplum* is an archetype of human action. Immediately before the passage where Leo reintroduces the word *persona*, the two ideas come together for the first time in discussing the saving effect of the cross:

For the cross of Christ, which was paid for the salvation of mortals, is both a *sacramentum* and an *exemplum*: a *sacramentum* by which divine power is fulfilled, an *exemplum* by which human devotion is aroused, because to those rescued from the yoke of captivity redemption also brings it about [*praestat*] that the imitation of following it is possible.[177]

---

[176] *Tr* 72.2.   [177] *Tr* 72.1.

Again, Leo is carefully balancing the divine and the human in salvation. The cross is a divine saving act, but it is accomplished through suffering humanity. The cross makes possible a new pattern for human life, but it is accomplished by divine power.

Leo's achievement in 443–4 of a fuller expression and clearer definition of the suffering humanity of Christ, the future glorification of humanity in the ascended Christ, and the unity of divine and human in Christ's *persona*, can thus be seen as his response to the challenge of Manichaeism. Against the Manichees, he wanted to insist on the reality of Christ's humanity and its glorification; yet he could not afford to assert an independent humanity, disjointed from the divine. This double emphasis is apparent in the different way he handled the two moments in Christ's life where the relationship of the divine and human was most perplexing: the temptations in the wilderness and the agony in the garden.

His Lent sermon of 444 was his third review of Christ's temptations.[178] Both previous accounts had depicted Christ's triumph as the victory of humility rather than power and the implicit objective of the Devil was to tempt him to sin like Adam.[179] This time, however, Leo offers a different account of the Devil's aim: to ascertain the identity of Christ, whether he was God or simply man. The first two temptations tried to discover whether he was God—changing stones into bread or flying through the air. As Christ resisted both of these in human goodness, the Devil then tempted him to human domination; though he failed, the Devil was now ready to persecute him as a man. Though Leo leaves the question of the relationship of the natures unexplored, the main effect of the passage, which mirrors his oft-repeated account of the meaning of the Magi's gifts, is to assert that while the Devil was certain of one thing, that Christ was human, the truth was that he was both God and man.

Leo had shown exceptional boldness in addressing the problems raised by Christ's distress in Gethsemane in the Palm Sunday sermons of 442[180] and 443.[181] The first had offered an account of Christ sharing and curing human anguish; the second described Christ's human will submitting in obedience to the divine will. Leo gave the scene

---

[178]　*Tr* 42.3.　　　[179]　*Tr* 39.3 (Lent 441), 40.3 (Lent 442).
[180]　*Tr* 54.4.　　　[181]　*Tr* 56.2.

even greater prominence in 444, choosing to end his Palm Sunday sermon and recommence the sermon for the Wednesday of Holy Week at this point in the narrative.[182] There is a striking account of the human suffering accepted by Christ which expressly repudiates docetism.[183] He then fuses his two previous accounts. On the one hand, God has taken human nature and with it human weakness to himself in order to overcome human weakness: 'for this, mercy underwent the sufferings of our mortality, that it might heal; for this, strength accepted [them], that it might conquer.'[184] On the other hand, though he carefully insists that the Lord Jesus never wanted to withdraw from his passion,[185] he attributes the prayer for the cup to pass him by to human nature, pleading the cause of human frailty and disquiet, and then the prayer of acceptance of the divine will as said once he had passed to another mood (*in alium affectum transit*).[186] Here again, the human will submits to the divine even though it has expressed the agony of human fear. As he began his Wednesday sermon three days later, he drew out the meaning of the scene in Gethsemane:

When, in the words of his sacred prayer, the Lord had declared that the divine and human natures were most truly contained [*inesse*] in him, showing whence it was that he did not want to suffer and whence that he did choose to do so, human fear having been expelled and divine strength having been confirmed, he returned to the purpose of the eternal plan.[187]

The Lord in whom these two natures were contained was described two days later, in the Good Friday sermon, for the first time in three years as the *persona*.[188] The message Leo found in this episode in 444 was therefore both that Christ was human and, more sharply than before, that he was the union of human and divine.

---

[182]   *Tr* 58.4–5, 59.1.
[183]   *Tr* 58.4: *Nec quia omnia in illo plena erant sacramentis, plena miraculis, ideo aut falsis lacrimis fleuit, aut mendaci esurie cibum sumpsit, aut simulato sopore dormiuit. In nostra humilitate contemptus, in nostra maestitudine contristatus, in nostro est dolore crucifixus.*
[184]   *Tr* 58.4: *Passiones enim mortalitatis nostrae ob hoc misericordia subiit, ut sanaret, ob hoc uirtus recepit, ut uinceret.*
[185]   *Tr* 58.4.   [186]   *Tr* 58.5.
[187]   *Tr* 59.1A. The passage underwent minor revisions in the second edition where the word *inesse* was replaced by *esse*.
[188]   *Tr* 72.2.

As the autumn of 444 drew on, Leo had achieved his greatest triumph in Rome, the suppression of Manichaeism, and had brought central themes of his Christology and soteriology to a new level of expression. The following year, the fifth of his pontificate, would see the most effective assertion yet of papal authority in the western Church and his doctrinal work reaching fruition.

The Fifth Cycle of Sermons, 444–5

By 444, Leo's ascendancy in Rome was unprecedented. In Italy, his direct jurisdiction was unquestioned. With Cyril's death in the summer of 444, he was almost without rival as a theologian and churchman in both halves of the Mediterranean. His letter a year later to Cyril's successor, Dioscorus, carried by the very Posidonius who had been Cyril's messenger in the Nestorian crisis, is a remarkable document, telling the Bishop of Alexandria that he should show the same conformity to Rome that St Mark showed to St Peter and proceeding to offer detailed instructions on how he should conduct his diocese.[189] In the two disputed areas of Illyricum and Gaul, he met with greater success than his predecessors. He continued and perfected Roman policy in Illyricum, where he appointed Anastasius of Thessalonica as his vicar,[190] with authority to ordain metropolitans and to whom the metropolitans would answer.[191] A system of provincial discipline was set up of biennial local councils summoned by the metropolitans, referring important matters to a synod summoned by the vicar with Rome always as the highest court of appeal;[192] Leo did intervene against Anastasius, upholding a complaint from one of the metropolitans, Atticus of Epirus,[193] but the vicar's supremacy went unchallenged in Illyricum.[194] In Gaul, Leo found his opportunity to curb the power of Hilary and the authority of his see at Arles with an appeal against Hilary from Celidonius in 445; he not only overturned Hilary's conviction of Celidonius, accused of having married a widow, but deprived him of his rights as a metropolitan and transferred them

---

[189] *Ep* 9, PL 54.624–7.   [190] *Ep* 5, Silva-Tarouca, *Codex Thessalonicensis*, 58.
[191] *Ep* 6, Silva-Tarouca, *Codex Thessalonicensis*, 53–7, modified, *Ep* 14.6, PL 54.673.
[192] *Ep* 14.7, PL 54.673–4.   [193] *Ep* 14.1, PL 54.668–72.
[194] *Ep* 13, Silva-Tarouca, *Codex Thessalonicensis*, 60–2.

to Vienne. Doing this, he cast himself in the role of the protector of the Gallic bishops from Hilary's pretensions,[195] though it is far from clear that this assertion of papal power represented any resolution of the needs of the Church in Gaul.[196] Leo's own claims were entirely endorsed in July 445, eleven days before the anti-Manichaean decree, by a constitution of Valentinian III which declared that nothing should be done in the Churches against the papal decrees and that provincial governors should compel the attendance of anyone summoned to the papal court, while acknowledging that papal claims did not depend on imperial sanction.[197] None of his predecessors had secured comparable imperial recognition for the claims of the Apostolic See. Leo seemed to have brought the Apostolic See to its zenith.

The dozen sermons he preached in 444–5 crowned his achievement over the previous four years. He preached civic Christianity with a new sharpness of tone when he told the rich that keeping all the commandments but failing in practical charity was pointless[198] or that usury is always evil.[199] Almsgiving is the virtue that gives value to all others and wipes away sin.[200] In a passage reminiscent of Gregory of Nyssa, he called on his people to cleanse the mirror of their heart and thereby restore the image of God in their souls,[201] while he talked about the two loves and two wills, love of God or love of the world, in a strikingly Augustinian passage.[202] The unity of the Church in which all are kings by virtue of the Cross and priests by the power of the Holy Spirit, in which through baptism all share in undifferentiated fellowship and uniform dignity,[203] was a significant theme of the year; he picked up again in his Christmas sermon the idea, introduced the previous year, of the action of the Holy Spirit in Christ's birth being continued in baptism and added to it the text

---

[195] *Ep* 10.4, PL 54.631–3.

[196] Jalland, *Pope Leo the Great*, 113–28, regards Leo's actions as warranted and constructive; Mathison, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism*, 145–72, is highly critical both of Leo's methods and of the effect his policy had in Gaul.

[197] *Novella* 17, Mommsen, *Theodosiani Libri XVI*, 101–3: *Et erat quidem ipsa sententia* [that Hilary had wrongly ordained bishops] *per Gallias etiam sine imperiali sanctione valitura. Quid enim tanti pontificis auctoritati in ecclesias non liceret?*

[198] *Tr* 10.2 (Collection 444).   [199] *Tr* 17.3 (Dec. Fast 444).   [200] *Tr* 10.3.
[201] *Tr* 43.3 (Lent 445).   [202] *Tr* 90.3 (Sept. Fast 445).
[203] *Tr* 4.1 (Accession anniversary 444).

from 2 Peter 1.4 about being made partakers in the divine nature that he had used in his first Christmas sermon but not since.[204]

The Christmas, Epiphany, and Holy Week sermons added little to those that had gone before. He offered his congregation a striking parallel of the first and second Adams in his Christmas sermon;[205] there was a memorable description of the penetrating divine gaze of Christ, restoring the confidence of the wavering Peter in the High Priest's courtyard;[206] on his way to Calvary, Christ is depicted as untroubled and fearless, consoling the women of Jerusalem.[207] There was a heavier emphasis on Christ's divinity in the Christmas sermon,[208] and both the Christmas and Epiphany sermons linked *sacramentum* and *exemplum* as ways of associating Christ's two natures in salvation.[209] He presented a strong statement of the loss of the Devil's rights in the crucifixion, in which the Devil defeated himself.[210] Overall, these sermons show little sense of struggle or urgency. Leo is neither striving to clarify his own thinking nor challenging his congregation with fresh ideas. Two sermons, however, did strike out into new ground: the Transfiguration and the Ascension.

Leo preached on the Transfiguration in Lent. It is his only sermon on the subject and indeed is most unusual in addressing an episode that posed yet another Christological conundrum. Leo's purpose in preaching on that text was to speak about Christ's humanity and to that extent it reflected the concerns of the previous year's campaign against the Manichees. It is noteworthy, however, that whereas in 443–4 he had stressed the weakness and sufferings of Christ, that theme was wholly lacking in 444–5. The Christ whose divine gaze strengthens Peter and whose unperturbed generosity consoles the women of Jerusalem is not presented as beaten, tortured, or distressed as he had been the previous year. It seems then that this year Leo had decided to stress the closeness of the human to the divine in Christ and the impact of the divine on the humanity.

Most preachers avoided the Transfiguration.[211] Exegetes forced to comment upon it usually interpreted it either as an eschatological

---

[204] *Tr* 25.5 (Christmas 444).   [205] *Tr* 25.5.   [206] *Tr* 60.4 (Palm Sun. 445).
[207] *Tr* 61.3 (Wed. of Holy Week 445).   [208] *Tr* 25.2.   [209] *Tr* 25.6, 35.3.
[210] *Tr* 60.3, 61.4.
[211] Chrysostom is an exception, though the comprehensiveness of his preaching programme obliged it; *Hom*, 56, deals with it as an historical event within the narrative

sign, as did Hilary,[212] or as a mystical experience of the apostles, as did Ambrose[213] and Jerome.[214] In other words, what this incident revealed about the relationship of divine and human in Christ and how Christ could be glorified before his Resurrection was simply sidestepped. Cyril of Alexandria alone among commentators showed an interest in establishing what it was that the disciples saw, what had happened to Christ. In three different places,[215] Cyril argued that Christ was transfigured with the glory of the Resurrection as a sign of his future glory to encourage the disciples. Christ's flesh is divinised as divine glory is imparted to it.

Leo's purpose in expounding the text can be found in his starting point. Others began with Jesus' prophecy that some would not taste death until they saw the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom (Mt 16.28); what needed explaining was how the Transfiguration was the coming of the Son of Man in his Kingdom. Leo's starting point was different. He began with Caesarea Philippi, where he believed Peter confessed Christ's divinity—a common interpretation.[216] Following Hilary, Leo observed that however excellent this declaration, it was essential that Peter believe he was also human:

The Saviour of the human race, God the Christ, establishing that faith which calls back the 'wicked to justice' [Rm 4.5] and the 'dead to life' [Rm 4.17] filled his disciples with the teachings of doctrine and the miracles of works that the same one, the only-begotten of God and the Son of Man, was believed in. For one of them without the other would not profit for salvation and it is equally dangerous to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ either as God alone without man or only a man without God, since both should be confessed equally, because just as true humanity was in God so true divinity was in the man.[217]

---

of Christ's life but makes no attempt to address the Christological problems presented by the event, PG 58.549–58.

[212] Hilary, *Cm Mt* 17, PL 9.1012–8; J. Driscoll, 'The Transfiguration in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew,' *Augustinianum*, 24 (1984), 395–420.

[213] Ambrose, *Cm Lk* 7.1–22, *CC* 14, 214–22.

[214] Jerome, *Cm Mt* 3.17.1–9, *CC* 77, 147–50.

[215] Cyril, *Cm Mt*, PG 72.425–8, *Cm Lk*, PG 72.652–6, *Hom* 9, PG 77.1009–16.

[216] E.g. Hilary, *Cm Mt* 16.7, PL 9.1009–10, Chrysostom, *Hom* 54, PG 58.533–4, Jerome, *Cm Mt* 3.16.16, *CC* 77, 140.

[217] *Tr* 51.1. This passage is based on Hilary, *Cm Mt* 16.9, PL 9.1009–11 and is quoted in the Tome.

Peter confessed the divinity but this height of praiseworthy under-
standing needed to be strengthened concerning the lower nature,
lest Peter thought taking on weakness would be unsuitable for the
impassible God[218] or believed that his human nature was so glo-
rified that it could not be afflicted by punishment or dissolved in
death.[219] Christ therefore prophesied his passion; after rejecting this,
Peter was persuaded by Christ's kindly rebuke. At this point, Leo
leaves Hilary who now depicts the Transfiguration as an eschatolog-
ical sign. Leo presents it rather as the next step in Christ's teaching
his disciples about his identity. Christ was transfigured to strengthen
his disciples but also so that they should not believe that his suf-
fering, which was to undergo the savagery of his passion in such a
way that it did not put aside the glory of his power, was shameful
for him.[220]

   According to Leo, the Transfiguration was thus intended to save
the apostles from a Christological error. Their problem was to view
Christ's humanity as incompatible with suffering. Suffering, however,
had been prophesied and was inevitably going to happen. Therefore,
at the time of the Passion, they would be liable to abandon their ear-
lier view of the nobility of Christ's human nature and might conclude
he shared in the fallen state of all mankind. The Transfiguration was
to show them what kind of humanity Christ did in fact have. Jesus
took the three apostles up the mountain and:

showed them the brightness of his glory, because although they had recog-
nised in him the majesty of God, they did not know the power [*potentiam*]
of his body in which his divinity was contained. And therefore rightly and
significantly he had promised that some of the disciples standing around
should not taste death until they saw 'the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom'
[Mt 16.28], that is, in the royal brilliance which, specially belonging to the
nature of the man assumed, he wished to be apparent to these three men.
For in no way could they, still surrounded by mortal flesh, look upon and see
the ineffable and inaccessible vision of his divinity itself, which is reserved in
eternal life for the pure in heart.[221]

---

[218] Hilary, *Cm Mt* 16.10, PL 9.1011: *quia incredibile satis apostolis videretur, eum in
quo Deus erat esse passibilem.*
[219] *Tr* 51.2: *et ita iam in ipso humanam crederet glorificatam esse naturam ut . . .*
[220] *Tr* 51.2.   [221] *Tr* 51.2.

They cannot see his divinity in itself; they are ignorant of the power of his body; what they see is the royal brilliance that belongs especially to the nature of the assumed humanity. Therefore, having seen how noble Christ's humanity is, they would not be shaken by the crucifixion into thinking he had suffered the common lot of sinful men: 'In this transfiguration, what was principally done was to take away the scandal of the cross from the hearts of the apostles so that the humility of his voluntary passion should not disturb their faith, to whom was revealed the excellence of his hidden dignity.'[222]

For most early commentators on the Transfiguration, it is the glory of the divinity that is revealed; for Leo, the excellence of the hidden dignity is the *potentia* of his body, the royal brilliance which specially belongs to the assumed humanity. Does Leo mean that Christ's real condition as a sinless man was glorious but that this was usually hidden—the view of Origen[223]—or that this was a foretaste of the risen state of Christ? That he meant the latter is shown by his also observing that through the Transfiguration the whole body of Christ might know what kind of exchange is to be given and that the members might promise themselves a share in that honour which shone forth in the head.[224] Here, Leo is picking up his interpretation of Mt 16.28, that the kingdom in which the Son of Man shall be seen coming is his royal brilliance; the kingdom is identified with the Body of Christ and Christ's transfiguration is the sign of the glory that will finally be enjoyed by the members of his body. In this, Leo is following Hilary's *De Trinitate* from which he derived the phrase *in regia claritate*.[225]

It might therefore seem an unremarkable conclusion for Leo to regard the Transfiguration as some kind of prophecy of the Resurrection and disappointing that he goes no further in exploring how resurrection glory could be revealed in Christ before his passion, but what remains most noteworthy is Leo's view of the purpose of the Transfiguration: to reveal the truth about Christ's humanity, both its destiny but also its potential in its sinless state, to advance the disciples' Christological understanding, and to save them from error

---

[222] *Tr* 51.3.   [223] Origen, *Cm Mt* 12.37, *GCS* 40, 152–4.   [224] *Tr* 51.3.
[225] Hilary, *De Trinitate* 11.35–9, *CC* 62A, 563–7, E. Cavalcanti, 'The Sermon of Leo the First on the Transfiguration (*Serm* LI Chavasse),' *Studia Patristica*, 38 (2001), 371–6.

at the time of the passion. It is this that makes sense of the second half of the sermon, where he discusses the words of the Father as proof of Christ's divinity.[226] The whole sermon is therefore a demonstration of the two natures of Christ.

About two months later, Leo preached his second sermon on the Ascension.[227] He began by speaking about the achievements of Christ's humility in the form of a servant; then of the reversal of the mediation he had so often depicted—now weakness is turned to strength, mortality to eternity, disgrace to glory—and then of the carrying up of our human nature to the Father's throne where desire must be fixed by faith not by sight.[228] In making an end to his bodily presence until the time for the second coming, 'what was to be seen of our redeemer has passed over into sacraments'[229] and now sight has been replaced by teaching to make faith the more firm.[230] The evidence for the new power of the Ascension is the martyrs, all over the world and of all kinds of people, and before them the apostles fixing the gaze of their souls on Christ seated at the Father's right hand.[231]

The heart of the sermon is the claim that Christ becomes more present in his divinity as he became more remote in his humanity.[232] Leo was following Augustine who claimed that the absent Christ is still truly present for his majesty has never been withdrawn from the world,[233] and though ascended he is yet still here for he has never withdrawn the presence of his glory.[234] Augustine explained this more fully: Christ has gone away with respect to his visible humanity but remained with respect to his divinity.[235] Significantly, Leo has gone further than Augustine; Christ is now more present in divinity. What Leo means by this is that it becomes easier to grasp the truth of Christ's divinity when he can no longer be touched in the flesh—a point he illustrates by referring to the *Noli me tangere* to the Magdalen and the message of the angels to the disciples at the Ascension.[236] Leo

---

[226] *Tr* 51.6–7.   [227] *Tr* 74.   [228] *Tr* 74.1.

[229] *Tr* 74.2: *Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transiuit.*

[230] *Tr* 74.2.   [231] *Tr* 74.3.

[232] *Tr* 74.4: *ineffabili modo coepit esse Diuinitate praesentior, qui factus est humanitate longinquior.*

[233] Augustine, *In Ioh, Tr* 50.4, *CC* 36, 434–5.   [234] Ibid. 50.13, *CC* 36, 439.

[235] Ibid. 78.1, *CC* 36, 523.   [236] *Tr* 74.4.

often gives the impression that the flesh of Christ is a veil or barrier, hiding the divine. No doubt this is in his mind at this point. But Leo's substantial point is that Christ is now present in a new way, in *sacramenta*, which allows a firmer and purer understanding of his divinity to strengthen the Church. With this new presence begins the new age of the martyrs. It is that presence that the Church participates in by the celebration of the liturgy when the mysteries of Christ are made present again *hodie*.

Conclusion

In 441–3, Leo developed two soteriological models to explain how Christ had to be God as well as man to save mankind. His account of Christ's innocent suffering as a restoration of justice, overturning the power of the Devil, depended on Christ's being divine in order to be sinless. At the same time, it was an ever greater triumph for justice that it should be the divine Word suffering as man and not just an innocent man. This model led to the forgiveness of sins, but it was reinforced by an account of Christ the Mediator, translating the divine into a human life, bestowing glory in the Resurrection and Ascension. In 443–4, Leo's response to the threat of Manichaeism in Rome prompted him to emphasise the humanity of Christ, stressing particularly the sufferings of the passion, and that in turn led him to re-state the unity of the two natures in Christ as his *persona*. These ideas opened the way to his interpretation of the Transfiguration and Ascension in 444 and 445. The influence of Hilary and Augustine can be seen throughout these years, especially Augustine's sermons on John's Gospel.

   Leo also shared some of their limitations, especially his failure to develop his theology of the Holy Spirit. He offered a consistent account of salvation in the city, of Christianity completing rather than subverting civic life, and in the process brought the papacy to an eminence in Rome that it had never previously reached. By 445, he was dominant in Italy, unrivalled in the West, ready to make his mark in the East.

6

———

The Tome of Leo

Introduction

Leo's Tome is much read but little understood. In a number of ways, it was atypical of the emphases of his theology and it was precisely where Leo was at his least characteristic that he was criticised at Chalcedon and later. The reason for this is because he aimed the Tome against Nestorius as well as Eutyches: it was a major attempt to offer a new settlement of the Christological disputes of the previous twenty years, effectively replacing the Formula of Reunion which Eutyches had challenged. Unfortunately, Leo still held to the understanding of the heresy of Nestorius which Rome had adopted in 430, that he was an adoptionist who effectively denied Christ's divinity. He saw him therefore as the polar opposite of Eutyches who denied Christ's humanity. Facing two heresies that were in their different ways one-nature, Leo produced a statement that asserted the duality of the natures. It was only after Chalcedon that Leo recognised that Nestorius' critics in the East believed his real failure had been an inability to define the unity of the two natures, which left his Tome looking distinctly Nestorian. In 453, Leo produced a second Christological statement in the form of a letter to the rebellious monks of Palestine which was far more successful in combining an account of the oneness of Christ with the duality of the natures. That letter was more representative of Leo's thinking. It has a claim to be his best work and to be a far more significant contribution to the Christological disputes than his Tome.

Neither of these major essays in doctrine would have been attempted had Leo not already begun to develop the papal letter as

a vehicle for theological teaching in the years after his first cycle of sermons. Leo was therefore not only the first pope to lay down a corpus of sermons, but also the first to produce letters as a didactic instrument.

Two Letters in 447

Siricius was the first pope to produce decretals, starting in 385. Successive popes produced a steady trickle of admonitions, adjudications, and instructions,[1] but none of them wrote anything like Leo's Tome. They offered answers but no explanations. They wrote like jurists, not theologians. Leo's Tome, his *Epistle* 28, written in 449, was wholly different from anything his predecessors had attempted: a doctrinal statement that did not simply condemn Eutyches but showed him why he was wrong in a theological treatise. Leo could not have written it before 444, when he reached a firmer definition of the one person of Christ. He would not have written it before 447, when he first explored the use of papal letters as a tool of catechesis.

He wrote two letters which were short theological treatises in 447. The first, written in the summer, was a response to a request for support from Bishop Turibius of Astorga[2] who was confronting a revival of Priscillianism in his diocese. Turibius sent Leo a commonitorium listing Priscillianist errors under sixteen headings and sought Leo's endorsement of his condemnation of them. Leo responded by commenting on each of the sixteen points.[3] That Leo intervened to support Turibius is not surprising: Galicia had been conquered by the Suevi who established their capital at Braga, the metropolitical see of the province; Turibius had been energetic in pursuit of Manichaeans

---

[1] Between 385–440 seven popes left 95 letters.

[2] H. Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976), 208–17.

[3] *Ep* 15; a critical text together with a detailed study of the manuscript tradition and discussion of the likely contents of Turibius' original documents is provided by Benedikt Vollmann, *Studien zum Priszillianismus: Die Forschung, Die Quellen, der fünfzehnte Brief Papst Leos des Grossen* (Erzabtei St Ottilien, 1965); another edition of the text, from a different manuscript tradition, has been edited by J. Campos, 'La Epistola antipriscillianista de S León Magno,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 269–308, which provides notes of a largely philological rather than theological character.

after their condemnation by Leo and had allied himself in this with Antoninus of Mérida, Metropolitan of Lusitania. Leo was thus acting to support a bishop whose own metropolitan appears to have been immobilised by barbarian invasion in a crusade that had absorbed a great deal of his own energy. That Leo's intervention took the form of a short treatise, however, is surprising: it broke with precedent. The explanation, of course, was that Turibius identified Priscillianism with Manichaeism and Leo saw an opportunity to offer a fuller refutation of the errors of the Manichees than his sermons in 443–4 had allowed.

Turibius' sixteen points provided Leo with a theological agenda that amounted to a short conspectus of Christian doctrine. Unfortunately, they also led Leo into a certain amount of repetitiousness, especially discussing the Priscillianist view of astrology. While the main thrust of the letter addressed the nature of God and the created world, Leo reviewed the doctrine of God, the nature of the Trinity, Christology, Creation, anthropology, ecclesiology, and soteriology. As a contribution to the debate about Manichaeism, the letter is interesting. As a sign of Leo's growing theological confidence, it is extremely important. But as an innovation in the functioning and aspirations of the papacy, it was crucial.

Leo sent his letter to Turibius on 21 July 447. Exactly three months later, he sent two letters to the bishops of Sicily. One was a standard papal missive on the alienation of Church property;[4] the other[5] repeated the ban laid down by Siricius in his first decretal of 385 against performing baptisms at any time other than the paschal season.[6] Unlike Siricius' terse injunction, Leo's letter was a substantial short treatise. It is clear that he would not have written it but for the success of his last essay in theological instruction three months before.

The point at dispute was that the practice had grown up in Sicily of performing baptisms at Epiphany. Though Rome celebrated only the visit of the Magi on 6 January, it was common elsewhere to commemorate the miracle at Cana or the Baptism of Christ.[7] From

---

[4] *Ep* 17, PL 54.703–6.   [5] *Ep* 16, PL 54.695–704.
[6] Siricius *Ep* 1, PL 13.1134–6.
[7] E.g. Maximus of Turin, *serm* 64.1, *CC* 23, 269, says that many commemorate Cana and some the Baptism at Epiphany. Of his Epiphany sermons, the majority

this, it seems that the practice of baptising on 6 January arose, at first apparently in Cappadocia.[8] This was based on the view that Christ instituted Christian baptism in his own Baptism.[9] This was the point that Leo disputed. He insisted that people should only be baptised at Easter and Pentecost.[10] To argue his case, Leo had first to establish why Easter is the feast at which baptism was established and secondly what is its relationship to Pentecost;[11] then he had to offer some account of the other saving mysteries of Christ's life in relation to Easter,[12] especially his Baptism;[13] finally, he had to explain the relationship between the Church's sacraments and the mysteries celebrated in the liturgy.[14]

His argument for the last point is the weakest. He relies simply on the institution of the feasts and sacraments by the Holy Spirit and the apostles as embodied in Roman custom, which was presumably precisely what was in dispute. But behind that claim lay his view of the relationship of the events of Christ's life to the paschal mystery. First, he says that redemption is immutably predetermined in the eternal plan of God but it took place in time in an order of events originating in the Incarnation: the Annunciation, the birth, the circumcision, the presentation in the Temple, the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the human bodily growth, the finding of the 12-year-old boy Jesus in the Temple at Passover when his words about being about his Father's business revealed his divinity, the Baptism when the descent of the Holy Spirit and the words of the Father also revealed his divinity. In all the actions of Christ's life, *sacramentorum mysteria* shone forth; yet there is a difference between proclaiming by signs and fulfilment in deeds. At this point, he might have expanded on his remark in his second Ascension sermon, that what had been visible in our Redeemer has now passed over into *sacramenta*.[15] All Christ's acts were full of miracles and if all were to be commemorated indiscriminately, his

---

celebrate the Baptism: 13A *CC* 23, 44–6, 13B *CC* 23, 48–9, 64 *CC* 23, 269–71, 65 *CC* 23, 273–4, 100 *CC* 23, 398–400, only one, 101 *CC* 23, 402–4, celebrates Cana.

[8] G. Nazianzen, *Orations*, 39 and 40, PG 36.336–60, 360–425; see esp. 40.24 where he rebukes people who postpone baptism, waiting for Easter or Pentecost, PG 36.392.

[9] G. of Nyssa, '*In Diem Luminum sive in Baptismum Christi*' in W. Jaeger and H. Langerbeck (eds.), *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, vol 9 (Leiden, 1967), 221–42.

[10] *Ep* 16.1 and 16.5.   [11] *Ep* 16.3 and 16.6.   [12] *Ep* 16.2.
[13] *Ep* 16.6.   [14] *Ep* 16.2 and 16.5.   [15] *Tr* 74.2.

whole lifetime would have to be observed in a continuous series of festivals.[16] In other words, the whole of Christ's life is salvific—a view he defends by saying that everything that pertains to Christ's humility and everything that pertains to his glory come together in one and the same person and whatever is in him both of human weakness and of divine strength tends to effect our restoration.[17] While he presents impeccable scriptural evidence that baptism is incorporation into Christ's death by citing Rm 6.3–5 and that Christ himself ordered his apostles to baptise after his Resurrection,[18] and later that baptism was instituted by Christ on the cross as blood and water flowed from his side,[19] Leo does not elaborate on how the events of Christ's life were ordered towards his death and Resurrection but his meaning is plain: they are all the actions of divinity and humanity united in one person but human weakness and divine strength are most fully expressed in death and Resurrection.[20]

Further insight into Leo's thinking, however, can be gained in examining what he says about Christ's Baptism. He observes that the descent of the Spirit and the Father's words reveal Christ's divinity.[21] But if Christ was not baptised in order to institute baptism, why was the sinless one baptised at all? Here Leo offers a very interesting interpretation: that it manifested his humanity as one born of a woman under the Law (Gal 4.5) in just the same way as his circumcision.[22] Three points can at once be made. First, Christ's Baptism is therefore a revelation of his two natures; secondly, it is an act of humble obedience and of solidarity with sinful humanity; thirdly, it belongs to the old dispensation along with John the Baptist in which Christ is content to live until his death fulfils the Law. In his Epiphany sermons, Leo had repeatedly claimed that the visit of the Magi manifested his divinity and his humanity; he made the same claim about the Transfiguration; he is making the same claim again here about the Baptism.

---

[16] *Ep* 16.2.   [17] *Ep* 16.3.   [18] *Ep* 16.3.   [19] *Ep* 16.6.

[20] Leo says although [*Quamvis ergo*] all the events are the work of the two natures, particularly however [*proprie tamen*] are the death and Resurrection (*Ep* 16.3). There is abundant evidence elsewhere that Leo held Easter to be the supreme feast towards which all others are ordered, see J.-P. Jossua, *Le Salut*, 283–7; for Leo's views on the saving effect of the Resurrection, see F. Hofmann, 'Die Osterbotschaft in den Predigten Papst Leos der Grossen,' in B. Fischer and J. Wagner (eds.), *Paschatis Sollemnia: Studien zu Osterfeier und Osterfrommigkeit* (Freiburg, 1959), 76–86.

[21] *Ep* 16.2.   [22] *Ep* 16.6.

Though Leo does not go further in defining the relationship of the actions of Christ's life and the paschal mystery, he does try to establish the link between Easter and Pentecost. Pentecost is the sequel and completion of the Paschal feast—that is why it is always celebrated on a Sunday. The Son of God wanted no distinction to be made between himself and the Holy Spirit either in what the faithful believed or in the power of their works since there was no distinction in their nature. Christ thus asked the Father to send another Paraclete; Christ is the Truth and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and thus they are both Paracletes. There is no difference in the feasts where there is one *sacramentum*. What this appears to amount to is that since the Spirit performs the same work as Christ, then Pentecost is not separate from Easter.

What therefore emerges from this letter is some attempt by Leo to distinguish between the saving value of Christ's life, which manifests his two natures in the actions of the one person, and his death and Resurrection which manifest the two natures completely. They are of immense significance but it is the Pasch that is of final significance, such that the Spirit continues its achievement.

Leo's letter to the Sicilian bishops is tantalising and disappointing, but it reveals again the soteriology rooted in his Christology that he had reiterated in the sermons of the first five years of the pontificate. Furthermore, it gave him another chance to develop his talents as a theologian in a different medium and on a larger scale than his sermons. Two years later, he was to show the scale of his ambition by writing his Tome to Flavian.

Prosper of Aquitaine and the Authorship of Leo's Tome

Prosper of Aquitaine has been depicted as Leo's theological adviser and even the author of a considerable proportion of his work, especially the Tome to Flavian. These claims are more commonly repeated than scrutinised. The arguments in favour of Prosper's having written any of Leo's sermons or letters, however, are surprisingly fragile and the underlying assumptions, that Prosper was an expert in Christology and that Leo needed a theological expert to write his most important work, are less than compelling.

Prosper's career intersected that of Leo the Great at a number of points. A devoted defender of Augustine's teaching on grace, he elicited from Augustine the *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* and the *De Dono Perseverentiae* in about 428.[23] He went to Rome to canvass the Pope's support and was rewarded with an encomium of Augustine though not an endorsement of his doctrine from Celestine in about 431.[24] This visit must have been observed with interest by Leo, who was then archdeacon and who had commissioned the *De Incarnatione* from Prosper's adversary Cassian a little over a year before. Prosper attacked Cassian shortly afterwards in the *Contra Collatorem*, a response to Book 13 of the Conferences. It is commonly said that Prosper then moved to Rome, either in the mid-430s or at the time of Leo's election in 440. The evidence for this is slight. His Chronicle certainly records an increasing interest in Roman affairs from the mid-430s and especially great admiration for Leo, but it does not necessarily show any less knowledge of Gaul, so it cannot be presented as evidence for his move, as Robert Markus has shown in a short study of Prosper as an historian.[25] The notion that Leo took him back with him when he was elected in 440 seems to be based on the idea that he was the author of Leo's first sermon, which depends on its attribution to Prosper in a ninth-century MS, the Codex Thuaneus, but which gets no credence in the best editions of the sermons. The further idea that he was Leo's secretary is no older than the notoriously unreliable mid-ninth-century martyrology of Ado of Vienne.[26] Nevertheless, since Gennadius of Marseilles, writing about 480, remarked that Prosper was believed to have drafted correspondence for Leo against Eutyches[27] and the Patriarch Photius in the ninth century reported that Prosper confuted Pelagians in Rome in Leo's time,[28] there is

[23] Prosper's letter to Augustine is *Inter Epp Aug* 225 (*CSEL* 57, 454–68); see also the letter of Hilary, whose identity is uncertain, *Inter epp Aug* 226 (*CSEL* 57, 468–81).

[24] Celestine, *Ep* 21.1–2, PL 50.528–30.

[25] R. Markus, 'Chronicle and Theology: Prosper of Aquitaine,' in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography 350–900* (Exeter, 1986), 31–43; esp. 32–33.

[26] G. Renaud and J. Dubois (eds.), *Le martyrologe d'Adon: ses deux familles, ses trois recensions: texte et commentaire* (Paris, 1984).

[27] *De Viris Inlustribus*, 85, in W. Herding (ed.), *Hieronymi De viris inlustribus liber. Accedi Gennadii Catalogus virorum inlustrium* (Leipzig, 1924).

[28] *Bibliotheca*, 54, in R. Henry (ed.), *Bibliothèque* (Paris, 1959).

enough evidence to suggest a strong connection with Leo and at least some sojourn in Rome. As his Chronicle stops in 455, it is usually thought he died about then.

The relationship between the work of Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine has been a subject of contention since the seventeenth century, a dispute usefully summarised by Francesco di Capua.[29] In 1678, Joseph Antelmi (Canon of Fréjus: 1648–97) proposed that Prosper of Aquitaine was the author of all of Leo the Great's work. His starting point was Gennadius' remark about Prosper being thought to have drafted correspondence for him against Eutyches, but he went far further in attributing all of Leo's work to Prosper. One of his arguments was that Leo was far too busy to have written his own work, which simply does not withstand examination. Nor does his contention, to account for the obvious stylistic differences between the two writers, that Prosper had imitated Leo's style; as Francesco di Capua acidly remarked, it is difficult to see how Prosper could copy the style of someone who had written nothing.[30] Pasquier Quesnel (1634–1719), who had produced a learned edition of Leo's works in 1675, refuted Canon Antelmi. Pietro Ballerini (1698–1769) and his brother Girolamo (1701–81) reviewed the dispute briefly in the preface to their edition of Leo's works produced in Venice in 1753–57 and were equally dismissive of Antelmi's claims.[31]

The dispute was re-opened in 1949 when J. Gaidioz wrote an influential article claiming that Prosper was the author of the first draft of Leo's Tome to Flavian.[32] Apart from a reference to Gennadius, Gaidioz's case rested chiefly on the avoidance of the word *substantia* in the Tome; where the Tome quotes Leo's own sermons, the word

---

[29] Cf. F. di Capua, 'Leone Magno e Prospero di Aquitania,' *Scritti Minori*, vol 2 (Rome, 1959), 184–90: he reviews the evidence for Prosper's career, 184–5.

[30] Ibid. 185; he describes Prosper's style as less expressive or incisive than Leo's; his prose rhythm is more flaccid and less fluent, his clausulae less sonorous, less numerous and less regular, 186.

[31] Reprinted in Migne, PL 54.123–4.

[32] J. Gaidioz, 'Saint Prosper d'Aquitaine et le Tome à Flavien,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23 (1949), 270–301. H. Arens, *Die christologische Sprache Leos des Großen: Analyse des Tomus an den Patriarchen Flavian* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1982), 105–10, accepts Gaidioz's case uncritically, discussing only the problem of the discrepancy in prose style which he disposes of unconvincingly by pointing out that Prosper's published works are a different genre and that Leo's style might have been the product of the papal chancery.

natura is substituted for the earlier *substantia*. Gaidioz claimed that *substantia* was Leo's typical word for nature but was never used by Prosper and that therefore Prosper was responsible for the changes.[33] This is open to debate. First, it assumes that Leo was unable to see for himself that *substantia* might have been a problematic word in a letter addressed to Greek readers. Secondly, it ignores the fact that Leo had already shown his sensitivity to Augustine's preference for *essentia* in his anti-Priscillian letter of 447.[34] Thirdly, it can only account for Leo's use of *substantia* in later correspondence as an unintelligent relapse by the pontiff when Prosper was not available to help. Gaidioz went on to point to other echoes of Prosper's work in the Tome,[35] but, rather than unveiling Prosper's hand behind the final draft, these suggest rather that Leo might well have read Prosper along with other works that he used of his own accord. This observation can account for the similarity between the introduction to the Tome and Prosper's *Epistola ad Augustinum*[36] and a variety of phrases drawn from a number of Prosper's works that resemble similar expressions in the Tome and other letters of Leo.[37]

Despite the flimsiness of his arguments, Gaidioz's claims passed over into accepted orthodoxy. Yet the underlying idea that Prosper was Leo's secretary lies on a congeries of assumptions, while no evidence is presented to show that Prosper was an expert in Christological questions rather than simply a partisan of Augustine in the great debate about grace and predestination.[38] Gaidioz's readiness to see Prosper as the original author of the Tome is fuelled by the further assumption that Leo was not much of a theologian. Admittedly, Leo was willing to turn to supposed experts for advice, as when he commissioned Cassian's *De Incarnatione*, but he seems to have been equally ready to ignore their contribution, as he seems to have done with significant parts of Cassian's monograph. The engagement of Cassian in 430 only makes the supposed employment of his opponent

---

[33] Ibid. 284–286.

[34] B. Vollmann, *Studien zum Priszillianismus: Die Forschung, Die Quellen, der Funfzehnte Brief Papst Leos des Grossen* (Erzabtei St Ottilien, 1965).

[35] Gaidioz, 'Saint Prosper d'Aquitaine,' 288–9.

[36] Ibid. 291–2.   [37] Ibid. 293–7.

[38] Though Gaidioz had written a PhD on Prosper's Christology at Lyon in 1947, there is no demonstration of Prosper's competence in this field of theology in the published article.

Prosper in 440 the more puzzling. The relationship between Prosper and Leo that Gaidioz assumed, of a bishop who was a consummate stylist but no great theologian and his theological expert, looks even less plausible when the unfolding argument about Prosper's own theological work is considered.

In 1927, Dom Maieul Cappuyns published a highly influential article claiming that Prosper was the author of the *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium*.[39] Given Prosper's strenuous defence of Augustine in his arguments with the monks of Gaul, it would seem to have required a significant shift for him to have produced a work that acknowledged the universal salvific will of God. Cappuyns argued that Prosper had already shown an interest in trying to reconcile the central Augustinian emphasis on the gratuity of grace with the universality of God's saving will and that his solution in this work was a compromise: God wanted the salvation of all, as indicated in 1 Tim 2:4, but especially of the faithful, as suggested by 1 Tim 4:10. God offered saving grace to all but especially to the faithful: they received, as it were, more of it.[40] Pasquier Quesnel had urged that the style of the *De Vocatione* was too good to be Prosper's and attributed the book to Leo. Cappuyns examined this hypothesis and showed first that since this had similar vocabulary, ideas, and reasoning to Prosper's work, it could therefore very easily be by him,[41] while Leo's authorship on the other hand was not supported by the manuscript tradition and Leo showed very little interest in the disputes about grace.[42] A close examination of parallels between the *De Vocatione* and passages in the works of Leo indicates very different interests and concerns but a possible influence of Leo on the text, especially the Tome.[43] Cappuyns therefore concluded that the shift in Prosper's thinking could be attributed to the influence of Leo and dated the *De Vocatione* as a very late work of Prosper's to about 450.[44]

Dom Cappuyns followed this article up with a further study of Prosper's development as a theologian.[45] He divided Prosper's career into three phases: a period of intransigent Augustinianism that lasted until about 432, when he wrote the letter to Rufinus on grace, the

---

[39] Cappuyns, 'L'auteur.'   [40] Ibid. 202–12.   [41] Ibid. 213–20.
[42] Ibid. 220–1.   [43] Ibid. 222–5.   [44] Ibid. 226.
[45] Cappuyns, 'Le premier représentant.'

Epistola ad Augustinum and the *Carmen de Ingratis*;[46] then a period of significant concessions dated to 433–5, when he wrote the *Contra Collatorem* against Cassian and the *Responsiones ad Capitula Objectionum Gallorum Calumnantium* and the *Pro Augustino Responsiones ad Capitula Objectionum Vincentianarum*, works in which he conceded the universal salvific will of God and insisted that the reprobation of sinners was based on their foreseen demerits;[47] then the period of his great concessions, when he moved to Rome (the only evidence for which adduced by Cappuyns is the supposed shift of interest in Prosper's Chronicle from Gaul to Rome in 434–5)[48] and perhaps produced his exposition of the Psalms and the pseudo-Celestine Capitula affixed to Celestine *Ep* 21, the *Liber Sententiarum ex Operibus Sancti Augustini Delibatarum* and the *De Vocatione*, where the shift away from predestination to foreknowledge becomes complete and the recognition of God's universal salvific will unambiguous though qualified by the special efficacy of the grace offered to all for the elect.[49] Though the dating of several of the works is speculative, this overall picture was highly persuasive. Once again, Leo was identified as a possible influence contributing to Prosper's last phase of major changes.[50]

Cappuyns' work on Prosper cannot readily be reconciled with the claims put forward by Gaidioz. For Cappuyns, Prosper moved gradually from the influence of Augustine to that of Leo. Leo's mind is here presented as independent and dominant in the relationship. Underlying Gaidioz's case was the contrary assumption, that Leo was no great theologian and that he relied on Prosper to draft his most significant doctrinal achievement. Even scholars who did not agree with Cappuyns' theory lent little comfort to that of Gaidioz. Georges de Plinval,[51] for instance, rejected Cappuyns' attribution of the pseudo-Celestine Capitula or the *De Vocatione* to Prosper and therefore the whole theory of a third phase of major concessions,[52] but he did acknowledge that Prosper made significant concessions in engaging with the objections raised in Gaul in a new

[46] Ibid. 310–18.   [47] Ibid. 318–26.   [48] Ibid. 326.
[49] Ibid. 326–35.   [50] Ibid. 327.
[51] G. de Plinval, 'Prosper d'Aquitaine interprète de saint Augustin,' *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 1 (1958), 339–55.
[52] Ibid. 350–1.

and constructive way. He attributed these revisions of Augustinian-ism to the influence of Leo, whose hand he detected in the second part of the *Responsiones ad Capitula Gallorum*.[53] For him, as for Cappuyns, Leo was the dominant force in the relationship. Robert Markus, in a short study of Prosper as an historian,[54] recognised that the signs that Leo influenced Prosper's doctrine of grace were more telling than the suggestion that Prosper wrote some of Leo's work. A different tack was taken by Rudolf Lorenz,[55] who argued that the pseudo-Celestine Capitula[56] and the *De Vocatione*[57] were both by Prosper but refused to see in them a major desertion of Augustinian ideas.[58] If this account were true, it would be equally fatal to Gaidioz's hypothesis. It would be hard to see how Leo and Prosper could have had any satisfactory working relationship, with very divergent doctrines of grace and very different theological agendas.

Prosper's published work affords little ground for thinking that he was proficient in the Christological debates of the eastern Churches. His interests were more directly to do with the doctrine of grace than the person of Christ. J.-P. Jossua's brief study of his Christology[59] gives the impression that here too Prosper was a disciple of Augustine but did not address Christological questions as an expert. Again, the frequently repeated assertion that Prosper's learning was needed to draft the Tome seems unwarranted.

In effect, modern research on Prosper has made Gaidioz's sugges-tion highly implausible. It is thus quite striking that, when Gaidioz's ideas were reprised and refined by Norman James in 1993,[60] the work of Cappuyns, Plinval, and Lorenz was ignored. James began by correcting Gaidioz's claim about the use of the word *substantia* in the Tome; Gaidioz had remarked that the other letters sent out on the same day also avoided *substantia*, and James shows that in fact the letter to Pulcheria did use it.[61] Where Gaidioz had been unwilling to

[53] Ibid. 351–2.   [54] Markus, 'Chronicle and Theology.'
[55] R. Lorenz, 'Der Augustinismus Prospers von Aquitanien,' *Zeitschrift fur Kirchengeschichte*, 73 (1962), 217–52.
[56] Ibid. 235–6.   [57] Ibid. 247–51.   [58] Ibid. 250–1.
[59] Jossua, *Le Salut*, 239–49.
[60] N.W. James, 'Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine: A Fifth-Century Pope and his Advisor,' *JTS*, 44 (1993), 554–84.
[61] Ibid. 558, cf. Leo *Ep* 31 to Pulcheria, *ACO* II.4, 10–11.

attribute the Tome to the Palestinian monks, which uses *substantia*, to Prosper, James argues persuasively that the use of the word depends on the audience: *substantia* was used to distance Leo from Nestorius in addressing the Palestinian monks, but was avoided to distinguish Leo from Eutychians in the letter to the Emperor Leo, where all the citations from the Tome to the Palestinian monks are translated back from *substantia* to *natura*. James then concludes that Prosper was the author of all three,[62] but this of course is a false deduction. In abandoning Gaidioz's original claim that Prosper's hand could be seen in his hallmark avoidance of *substantia*, the main argument for Prosper's authorship of the Tome has also been abandoned. Instead, an entirely unwarranted claim is made that it was Prosper who adjusted the terminology of the Christological formulations. There is no evidence whatsoever to say that Prosper had such a grasp of the differing positions in the East when Leo did not. Indeed, James falls back on the old idea that Leo was an administrator and not a theologian and so needed Prosper to do the work for him.[63] Yet later in the article he acknowledges that there is a significant proportion of Leo's corpus that shows no sign of Prosper whatever and that Leo was quite capable of coping with theological issues such as Pelagianism, Manichaeism, and Eutychianism without his aid.[64]

James suspects, on very slight evidence, that Prosper helped with the computation of the date of Easter[65] and detects verbal similarities between the *Contra Collatorem* and Leo's three anti-Pelagian letters,[66] but the echoes are faint and prove no more than that perhaps Leo had read the *Contra Collatorem*. It remains open to question whether Leo would have used Prosper to draft anti-Pelagian works when his earlier polemical writings in the controversy about grace had been so unsympathetic to the Pope's friend and adviser Cassian and had voiced a theology so alien to Leo's own. Having, as he thinks, established Prosper's role as Leo's theological expert in writing his three main Christological treatises and his three anti-Pelagian letters, James

---

[62] Ibid. 557–63.

[63] Ibid. 568; he makes the claim more strongly and at greater length in his unpublished Oxford D Phil thesis, 'Pope Leo the Great,' 44–6.

[64] 'Leo the Great and Prosper of Anquitaine,' 582–3.   [65] Ibid. 563–4.

[66] Ibid. 565–7.

now appeals to the ninth-century Codex Thuaneus, which attributed three of Leo's sermons to Prosper, including the first, to claim that these three sermons were indeed written for Leo by Prosper.[67] He makes this claim despite the difficulty of establishing an historical context in which the accession sermon could have been commissioned from Prosper or how Prosper could have imitated Leo's style before he had yet written anything. The evidence of the Codex Thuaneus against Leonine authenticity had been dismissed by Antoine Chavasse in his extensive review of the manuscript tradition in his edition of Leo's sermons of 1973.[68] From this, James moves on to claim that a number of other sermons show traces of 'distinctively Prosperian' doctrine.[69] None of the evidence cited is conclusive; even the strongest similarities prove no more than that Leo had read Prosper. James admits that, along with sermons that he thinks were drafted by Prosper, others that show no sign of Prosper's hand are quoted in the Tome and feels that the best explanation for this is the further unwarranted claim that Prosper edited Leo's first cycle of sermons as well as contributing to it.[70] The sermons were clearly thoughtfully revised but there is not the slightest evidence that this was the work of Prosper.

It is significant that Norman James's article takes no account of the modern research on Prosper for it is built on an entirely unexamined account of Prosper's theological concerns and expertise and his relationship with Leo. His own picture of Leo's theological competence is itself contradictory. He does not place the Tome or *Epistle* 124 in the overall context of Leo's developing thought and expertise to be traced in his sermons and letters. He demolishes Gaidioz's main contention about the word *substantia* in the Tome and yet treats his hypothesis as proven firm ground. He thinks that similarities constitute proof of authorship rather than at best some other form of dependence. Nowhere does he consider the problems raised by the marked differences of style between the two writers. Overall, he has failed to show that Prosper wrote anything that has come down under the name of Leo.

[67] Ibid. 569–70.   [68] *CC* 138, L–CLII.
[69] Ibid. 571–82.   [70] Ibid. 582.

Against Whom was the Tome Written?

Leo wrote to Eutyches at the start of June 448, responding to a letter in which the abbot had claimed there was a revival of Nestorianism in the Eastern capital.[71] There was a grim satisfaction in Leo's tone as he praised the abbot for his zeal for orthodoxy and asked for further information. It is clear enough what Eutyches was referring to. With the death of John of Antioch in 442 and Cyril of Alexandria in 444, relations between the two spheres of influence deteriorated sharply.[72] Each of their successors, Domnus and Dioscorus, saw the other as an aggressor, determined to overturn the fragile status quo that had obtained since 433. In this increasingly tense situation, the influence of Eutyches was decisive. The eunuch Chrysaphius, who dominated Eastern imperial policy from 441 till 450, had been baptised by him. He was thus not only an immensely powerful abbot in a city with an unusually large number of monasteries, he was widely thought of as the grey eminence of the court. The imperial government, in the years 445–7, attacked in turn three prominent Syrian bishops: Ibas of Edessa, a sharp critic of Cyril and defender of Nestorius, unpopular within his diocese; Irenaeus of Tyre, who as a distinguished layman had been a strong partisan of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus; and Theodoret of Cyrus, whose *Eranistes* was probably a polemical attack on Eutyches.

Eutyches himself was under some pressure from Eusebius of Dorylaeum to clarify his own Christological position; Eusebius, who as a layman had been one of the first to denounce Nestorius, was presumably immune to accusations of Nestorianism; but, along with Flavian who became Bishop of Constantinople in 446, he wanted to insist that the Formula of Reunion was the benchmark of orthodoxy. Eutyches' approach to Leo in the summer of 448 was presumably intended not so much to secure Rome's sanction for the increasing pressure on the Syrians but rather to draw him into the emerging dispute with Flavian

---

[71] *Ep* 20, *ACO* II.4, 3.
[72] Jalland, *The Life and Times of Leo the Great*, 209–14; R.V. Sellers, *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London, 1953), 30–56; K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1982), 198–200; N. Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople*, 112–24; F. Miller, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408–450* (Berkeley, CA, 2006), 160–4.

concerning the Reunion Formula.[73] The monasteries of Constantinople were divided among themselves which left Eutyches vulnerable:[74] the whole controversy from 448 onwards had, to some extent, the character of a monastic controversy about salvation and holiness. Eutyches' trial for heresy, precipitated by Eusebius in November 448 at the local synod of Flavian of Constantinople, was therefore an event of major significance.

Leo showed no awareness of these disputes when he replied to Eutyches. What is striking, however, is that even when he turned against Eutyches, having received news of his trial by Flavian, he still regarded Nestorius as a target for his pen. He probably thought Eutyches was right and that Nestorius still posed a real threat. With more than twenty years of experience as a distant observer of the eastern capital, Leo seems to have been ready to find almost any aberration flourishing in its hot-house atmosphere. It is not unlikely that while he consulted Flavian about Eutyches, he also made enquiries about the alleged Nestorian revival and in the process learned more about the dispute concerning Ibas and Theodoret. This would have reinforced his impression that the settlement of 433 was under threat and that the Formula of Reunion needed to be defended to assert the true understanding of Cyril against Eutyches and the condemnation of Nestorius against his putative defenders.

In 449, he opened a joint offensive against both Nestorius and Eutyches which preoccupied him for the next ten years. He seldom mentioned Eutyches without a counterbalancing reference to Nestorius; he thought that it was resistance to Nestorianism that had led the old man into error.[75] On the day he dispatched the Tome to Flavian, 13 June 449, he wrote to the Emperor's sister, Pulcheria,[76] who had played a major role in the fall of Nestorius and was an enemy of Chrysaphius,[77] and to a bishop who appears to have acted

[73] S. Horn, *Petrou Kathedra: Der Bischof von Rom und die Synoden von Ephesus (449) und Chalcedon* (Paderborn, 1982), 17–21.

[74] Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 223–41.   [75] *Ep* 34, ST 7, TD 15, 18.

[76] *Ep* 31, ST 4, TD 15, 9.

[77] P. Goubert, 'Le rôle de sainte Pulchérie et l'eunuque Chrysaphios,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1 (Würzburg, 1951), 303–21.

as his representative in Constantinople, Julian of Cos.[78] Both letters proscribed Nestorius as well as Eutyches.

Though the Robber Council of Ephesus in August 449[79] removed Domnus, Theodoret, and Ibas from office, overturned Flavian's condemnation of Eutyches, and deposed Flavian, Leo continued to reiterate the condemnation of Nestorius. In October 449, his letter to the clergy, nobles, and people of Constantinople lamenting the outcome at Ephesus, again condemned both heretics, coupled together in one, well-balanced sentence, though Nestorius was named and Eutyches, diplomatically, was not.[80] He condemned Nestorius again in another letter to the people of Constantinople later in the year.[81] In July 450, he wrote to the Emperor Theodosius II, expressing concern about Flavian's successor Anatolius and suggesting that he should study the documents that had brought about the downfall of Nestorius—the second letter of Cyril, the decrees of Ephesus—and now his own Tome.[82] He wrote to Pulcheria on the same day, expressing his simple request that Anatolius express his acceptance of Cyril's letter to Nestorius.[83]

Theodosius never saw that letter, as he died within days of its being sent after a riding accident. Pulcheria rapidly married Marcian, who was declared Emperor a month after Theodosius' death. In the autumn of 450, Leo wrote to the Abbots Faustus and Martinus in Constantinople, renewing his condemnation of Nestorius which again he coupled with Eutyches, whom he could now afford to name as a heretic once more.[84] In the spring of 451, Leo wrote to Pulcheria: just as she had successfully opposed Nestorius and had opposed Eutyches before, so she was opposing him again.[85] When he wrote to her in the summer asking her to replace Eutyches with a Catholic abbot, he coupled his heresy with Nestorius' again.[86] Again in the summer of 451, he wrote to Anatolius of Constantinople, observing that the faith of the Gospels and the apostles defeats all errors, hurling down on the one side Nestorius and on the other Eutyches.[87] His tone was triumphant at the end of June as he wrote to Paschasinus of Lilybaeum

---

[78] *Ep* 35, ST 6, TD 15, 14.   [79] Horn, *Petrou Kathedra*, 41–71.

[80] *Ep* 50, ST 15, TD 15, 39.   [81] *Ep* 59, ST 15b, TD 15, 46.

[82] *Ep* 69, ST 19, TD 15, 52.   [83] *Ep* 70, ST 20, TD 15, 54–5.

[84] *Ep* 75, ST 21, TD 15, 57.   [85] *Ep* 79, ST 23, TD 15, 58–9.

[86] *Ep* 84, ST 27, TD 15, 68–9.   [87] *Ep* 85, ST 28, TD 15, 70.

(Marsala), who was to be one of his legates to the new council, reporting that the whole Church of Constantinople with all the monasteries and many bishops had agreed to the condemnation of Nestorius and Eutyches and that the Bishop of Constantinople had written to him telling him that the Bishop of Antioch and all the bishops of his provinces had subscribed to his Tome and condemned Nestorius and Eutyches.[88] His letters then to Marcian,[89] to Anatolius,[90] and to the Council[91] all called for Nestorius and Eutyches to be condemned.

In the aftermath of Chalcedon, Leo still kept linking the name of Nestorius with Eutyches. Explaining the Council to the bishops of Gaul in January 452, he remarked that Nestorius had been condemned in the past and Eutyches now by this council, but that they were opposing twin heresies.[92] This buoyant mood did not last long. Alarmed by the rioting in Palestine that followed Chalcedon, he told Julian of Cos in November 452 that he was sending the monks there Athanasius' letter to Epictetus which casts down the heresies of both Nestorius and Eutyches.[93] Preaching at Christmas 452, he linked the two heretics again as opposite errors about the incarnation.[94] When he wrote in March 453 to the conciliar fathers of Chalcedon, he observed that Nestorius and Eutyches and Dioscorus had rightly been condemned but rejected canon 28 elevating Constantinople to second place among the churches.[95] In June, he wrote to Maximus of Antioch with a rounded condemnation of both Nestorius and Eutyches as heretics whose views present still a real threat.[96] He offered a major defence of his Tome in the letter to the Palestinian monks of June 453, where he described Nestorius and Eutyches as opposite heretics[97] and remarked that both along with Dioscorus had rightly been condemned.[98] The issue was sufficiently on his mind in September for him to preach against Nestorius and Eutyches again in his sermon for the Ember Days.[99] By the following March, he found himself in the astonishing position of having to defend himself against accusations of Nestorianism, which he has condemned as well as Eutyches[100]

[88] *Ep* 88, ST 30, TD 15, 75–6.
[89] *Ep* 89, ST 31, TD 15, 79.
[90] *Ep* 91, ST 32, TD 15, 81.
[91] *Ep* 93, ST 34, TD 15, 84.
[92] *Ep* 102, ST 54, TD 20, 117–18.
[93] *Ep* 109, ST 43, TD 20, 114.
[94] *Tr* 28.5.
[95] *Ep* 114, ST 41, TD 20, 107–8.
[96] *Ep* 119, ST 42, TD 20, 108–9.
[97] *Ep* 124, ACO II.4, 159–60.
[98] Ibid. 162.   [99] *Tr* 91.2.
[100] *Ep* 129, ST 55, TD 20, 141–2.

but which he attributed to inadequate translations of the Tome.[101] Even in 458, the controversy had not died down and Leo produced a revised version of his letter to the Palestinian monks, his Tome to the Emperor Leo, condemning again the opposing heresies.[102]

The evidence is overwhelming. Leo, even in the darkest days after the Robber Council, regularly linked Eutyches with Nestorius even when it must have become apparent that Nestorius presented no real threat. The only plausible interpretation of the evidence is that when he wrote the Tome Leo had two opponents in mind. As he defended the Tome over the years he had to keep identifying and condemning those two opponents, not only Eutyches but also Nestorius.

Twin Heresies: Nestorius and Eutyches

What then did he conceive their twin heresies as being? His view of Eutyches was plainly one shared by many who mulled over the evidence of the trial, which Flavian had sent to him.[103] The whole process was concerned with one question: would Eutyches accept the Formula of Reunion? The abbot not only implicitly disparaged the status of the Formula but rejected two of its key points: whether Christ had two natures after the union and whether he was consubstantial with mankind. Eutyches had insisted that there was only one nature in Christ after the union and seemed only to concede that Christ was consubstantial with his mother after a great deal of badgering and, he claimed, only under the instruction of his seniors. Flavian wrote twice to Leo, describing Eutyches' heresy as the denial of Christ's two natures and that, though he was consubstantial with his mother, his flesh was only human in form but not reality.[104] Flavian himself compared Eutyches with Apollinaris and Valentinus. This was grist to Leo's mill; only five years before, he had fought his decisive battles against Manichaeism and here was another docetic heresy to be confronted. What disturbed him most, presumably because he found it most intriguing, was Eutyches' statement

---

[101] *Ep* 130, ST 54, TD 20, 139, *Ep* 131, ST 56, TD 20, 143–4.
[102] *Ep* 165, ST 70, TD 9, 45–7.
[103] Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 56–69; Horn, *Petrou Kathedra*, 31–8.
[104] *Inter epp Leon* 22, 26, *ACO* II.2.1, 21–2, 23–4.

that he acknowledged two natures before the incarnation but one after.[105] It attracted his attention in the Tome and, in the package of letters he sent with it on 13 June 449, he offered some speculation about what it could mean. Writing to Julian of Cos, he expressed the suspicion that Eutyches held the Origenist doctrine of the pre-existence of souls and with it denied that Christ's flesh was of the same nature as ours.[106] Whether an Origenist or Apollinarian or cousin of the Manichees, Eutyches' heresy was plain—the denial of Christ's humanity.

What of Nestorius? Among the letters he sent with the Tome, he told Pulcheria that Nestorius believed that Christ was only a man born of his mother while Eutyches denied it was our substance born of the Virgin.[107] His account to Julian of Cos was more elaborate: Nestorius kept the divinity of the Word distinct from the man he had assumed (*ab adsumpti hominis substantia*) whereas Eutyches denied that Christ was a true man,[108] which he substantiated by quoting Eutyches' trial. He thus accused Nestorius of adoptionism, denying Christ's true divinity, and Eutyches of denying Christ's humanity. His letters to the Church of Constantinople in the autumn of 449 condemned those who deny the reality of the flesh of Christ[109] and Nestorius for believing that the Virgin conceived a man separate from the divinity who was afterwards assumed by the Word.[110] The underlying similarity of the two opposite heresies was most sharply defined in his letter to the abbots of Constantinople in November 450: though opposites, they have the same spirit of falsehood for true faith adores not one nature but one person.[111] In other words, Eutyches thinks Christ was only God, Nestorius thinks he was only a man; both see only one nature in him.

---

[105] J.S. Romanides, 'Leo of Rome's Support for Theodoret, Dioscorus of Alexandria's Support for Eutyches and the Lifting of the Anathemas,' *Theologia*, 65 (1994), 479–93, claims that Dioscorus supported Eutyches legitimately because he had made an acceptable confession at the trial; B. Emmi, 'Leone ed Eutiche,' *Angelicum*, 29 (1952), 3–42, also thinks Eutyches was wrongly condemned but contradicts himself: he says that Eutyches' denial of two natures in Christ was determined by his using the word *physis* to mean concrete individual (p. 32) but explains his saying that there were two natures before the union as referring to *physis* as an ideal nature (p. 38).

[106] Ibid. 16–17.
[107] *Ep* 31, ST 4b, TD 15, 9.
[108] *Ep* 35, ST 6, TD 15, 14.
[109] *Ep* 50, ST 15, TD 15, 39.
[110] *Ep* 59, ST 15b, TD 15, 46.
[111] *Ep* 75, ST 21, TD 15, 57.

Leo was simply repeating the view of Nestorius that Rome had maintained throughout the Nestorian controversy, a view that owed everything to the impact in Rome of Cyril's secret memorandum conveyed by Posidonius, reflecting the charges laid against Nestorius in Cyril's first letter to him, and then reinforced by Cassian's *De Incarnatione*. When Cyril revised his understanding of Nestorius' errors, Rome did not. Cyril, by the time of his second letter against Nestorius, defined his heresy as the division of Christ into two acting identities. Leo still described Nestorius' heresy as adoptionism, the separation of the divine and human such that Christ was a man adopted by the Word. Of course, one factor that prompted Celestine to take such a view of Nestorius in 430 was to isolate him as an extremist, to avoid any danger of opening up a wider rupture with his sympathisers. The same logic still applied. If Leo had come to hear of the disputes around Ibas of Edessa and Theodoret of Cyrus it was important to maintain the line that Nestorius had rightly been condemned as an outright heretic whereas others might be accommodated with more sympathy.

It is in this context that the Tome needs to be read.[112] Had his sole target been Eutyches, the main thrust of the Tome would have been a stout assertion of Christ's humanity. Instead, however, Leo was attacking two heresies that claimed, in his view, that Christ had only one nature. As much space is given in the Tome to asserting Christ's divinity, against Nestorius, as his humanity, against Eutyches. Furthermore, as the common failing in the two heretics was a belief that Christ had one nature, Leo insisted at length on the distinction between the manhood and the divinity, two natures with their distinct activities. Duality, not unity, is his presiding theme in much of the Tome precisely because it was intended to refute the opposite errors of Eutyches and Nestorius.

---

[112] Commentators on the Tome fail to see this point: Arens, *Die christologische Sprache*; Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 228–53; Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 1, 530–9; H. du Manoir, 'Saint Léon et la définition dogmatique de Chalcédoine,' *L'Année Théologique*, 40 (1951), 291–304; M.-J. Nicolas, 'La doctrine christologique de saint Léon le Grand,' *Revue Thomiste*, 51 (1951), 609–60; U. Dominguez-Del Val, 'S León Magno y el Tomus ad Flavianum,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 193–233; Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 1, 532–3, Manoir, 'Chalcédoine,' 295 and Nicolas, 'La doctrine,' 631, 638, note that Leo was still tilting against Nestorius but none of them understands his view of Nestorius in 449 and thus do not see its influence on the Tome.

The Purpose and Structure of the Tome

Various attempts have been made to analyse the Tome.[113] None of them has recognised Leo's purpose in writing it: to respond both to the heresy of Nestorius as understood in Rome since 428 and to respond to the heresy of Eutyches as reported by Flavian. Read this way, the Tome can be divided into five main parts. Only the first and last address the heresy of Eutyches directly. The central body of the text, apart from one short reference to Eutcyhes, has more the character of a general Christological statement. Each of these three central sections follows the same pattern of stating the theological theme and then giving its soteriological significance. This is Leo's answer to the theological disputes of the previous twenty years.

First, Leo opened with an introduction where he endorsed the condemnation of Eutyches. Secondly, he moved on to state the two births of Christ as God and man. This is the foundation of the whole Christological statement, aimed against both Nestorius and Eutyches. He explained the soteriological significance of the two births: it had to be God who became man for Christ to be sinless and overcome the Devil. He then proved the two births with a series of scriptural quotations. Thirdly, he addressed the problem of divine impassibility and human passibility in the incarnation, again addressing problems that were at the heart of the Nestorian controversy. He explained the soteriological significance of Christ being both impassible and passible in overcoming the Devil. Fourthly, since he believed that the common problem of Eutyches and Nestorius was the assertion that there is only one nature in Christ, he emphasised the distinction and duality of the natures at length and then showed their interaction in *communicatio idiomatum*, concluding by arguing that both natures

---

[113] The following analyses are described using Silva-Tarouca's division of the text into 205 verses (TD 9, 20–33). The Ballerini edition (PL 54.755–81) divides into six chapters: vv1–11, 12–53, 54–84, 85–125, 126–76, 177–205; this is simplified by Nicolas ('La doctrine'): 1–53, 54–84, 85–125, 126–205. Both of these divide one of Leo's quotations at vv 84–5, which only became apparent when Chavasse dated the sermons. Grillmeier (*Christ*, vol 1, 530) offers a different division to take account of that: 1–15, 16–53, 54–93, 94–120, 121–76, 177–205. Arens, *Die Christologische Sprache*, 690–1, divides 1–11, 12–53, 54–157, 158–87, 188–205; he provides a second, more detailed analysis which follows the sources Leo used rather than the logic of the argument of the Tome.

must be recognised for salvation. Fifthly, he addressed Eutyches' errors again, considering the implications of his denial of Christ's humanity, especially with regard to the crucifixion, and concluded that Eutyches had rightly been condemned and should be persuaded to change his mind.

Introduction

> Vv 1–11: The Judgment of Eutyches *Lectis dilectionis . . . istius adhuc senis corde non capitur*

The Tome opens with Leo's concurrence in Flavian's condemnation of Eutyches, who appears not only to be ignorant of scripture but of what any candidate for baptism should know.[114] The often-quoted description of Eutyches as *multum inprudens et nimis inperitus* is a calculated snub against the most prominent abbot in the Eastern capital; he is nowhere referred to as an abbot but had 'seemed worthy of the title of priest'. As an abbot, he would claim deep familiarity with scripture and to be a teacher of wisdom. Leo quickly wants to demolish any such claim to authority.

Two Births

1. Vv 12–24: 'Two Births Stated *Nesciens igitur . . . Nihil minuit, nihil contulit.*'

    Leo's starting point is very significant. He does not begin with either of the points for which Eutyches had been condemned— the denial that Christ has two natures after the Incarnation or that he is consubstantial with humanity. Rather, he takes as the basis of his whole account of Christ and his saving work the two births of Christ. Though this did strike at Eutyches, insisting that it was as a human child that the Son of God was born, its primary reference was to Nestorius, insisting that it was the Son of God who was born of Mary. Leo had authoritative warrant for building his theology upon the double birth as it was also

---

[114] There are verbal but not substantial similarities to several works by Prosper of Aquitaine in this passage: Gaidioz, 'Prosper d'Aquitaine,' 291–3.

the starting point of the Formula of Reunion.[115] The fact that he does not follow the Formula and go on to discuss Christ's double consubstantiality, despite that being a central point of contention in the trial of Eutyches, underlines the point that his primary concern at the start of the Tome is to resume the arguments of 428–33 against Nestorius. The foundation on which he wants to build is not the *persona* of Christ but rather the Son of God who is the subject of the Incarnation and therefore the true identity of Christ.[116]

Leo reaches the two births by quoting the old Roman Creed.[117] He offers the striking argument that if the Father is both almighty and father, then the Son must be eternally son, and it is he who is born of Mary. This is a neat summary of arguments that had been used by Athanasius and the Cappadocians, equating almighty with eternal, but though his form of words resembles passages in Prosper, the idea owes nothing to him.[118]

2. Vv 25–8: 'The Purpose of the Incarnation *Sed totum se reperando . . . nec mors potuit detinere.*'

[the birth in time] wholly expended itself to restore humanity, who had been deceived, so that it might defeat death and, by its power, 'destroy the Devil who held the power of death' (Heb 2.14). It would have been beyond us to overcome the author of sin and death had not he whom sin could not contaminate or death hold down taken up our nature and made it his own.

This passage is again aimed against both Nestorius and then Eutyches. Against Nestorius, it makes the point that Christ could only be sinless and immortal if he were divine—the Word, sinless and immortal, has taken human nature and is thereby able to defeat the Devil. This is Leo's clearest statement of an

---

[115] *ACO* I.2, 105: *ante saecula quidem ex patre natum secundum deitatem, in fine uero dierum eundem propter nos et propter nostram salutem de Maria uirgine secundum humanitatem, consubstantialem patri secundum deitatem et consubstantialem nobis secundum humanitatem.*

[116] Nicolas, 'La doctrine,' 634–8.

[117] It is scarcely credible that Leo imagined it was used universally; he is probably making a claim for the superiority of Roman usages here.

[118] Pace Gaidioz, 'Prosper d'Aquitaine,' 293.

idea he had entertained for several years. It ruled out any possibility of a perfect man who could be assumed for his merits. Against Eutyches, he insists that to overcome the Devil Christ had to be human—it is the birth in time which defeats death. Without elaborating the theory of the restoration of justice which he would come to later in the document, Leo plainly wanted to offer an account of soteriology that was deeply traditional and so could not be contested but which required a human Christ. By avoiding a soteriology of revelation or glorification, he made the necessity of Christ's humanity the more simply apparent.

3. Vv 30–53: 'The Scriptural Account of the Two Births *Sed si de hoc christianae fidei fonte . . . quam spiritus uitae rationalis animauit.*'

The catena of scriptural texts that Leo now presents to support what he has already said are again aimed against Nestorius as well as Eutyches. He starts with Mt 1.1, that the Christ is the Son of David and Son of Abraham[119] and then proceeds to quote Rm 1.1–3, that the Son of God became the seed of David according to the flesh. The Romans passage would strike against Nestorius, with the Son of God as the subject of the Incarnation, as much as against Eutyches with its reference to flesh. Taking the word 'seed,' Leo moves to Gen 22.18, that all generations would be blessed in the seed of Abraham, and then to Gal 3.16, that the seed of Abraham is Christ. Both of these texts underline the human ancestry of Christ, but Leo then goes to Is 7.14 as cited by Mt 1.23, that the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son who is Emmanuel, God with us; the text starts with the birth from the Virgin but then asserts the identity of the one born as God. From this verse of Isaiah, it was natural to move to Is 9.6 with the prophecy of the child born who is wonderful counsellor, mighty God, and prince of peace. These texts have clearly been chosen not simply to refute Eutyches but to connect Eutyches and Nestorius as opposite heretics whose ideas dismantle the Incarnation.

---

[119] He had already quoted this to prove Christ's humanity in *Ep* 31 to Pulcheria, ST 4b, TD 15, 9.

At this point, Leo pauses to direct his fire against Eutyches himself. He says that he should not have spoken as though Christ had the form of a man but not a body taken from the Virgin. He speculates that this might have been a mis-understanding of Lk 1.35, that the Holy Spirit would come upon the Virgin and that she would conceive the Son of God. Leo insists that despite the mode of conception, the flesh was real and natural. So when Wisdom built itself a house, Prov 9.1, the Word was made flesh, Jn 1.14, flesh assumed from a human being and animated with the spirit of rational life.

The fact that it is only at the end of the review of the scriptural passages that Leo turns directly to Eutyches is further evidence that the catena was drawn up to strike at both Nestorius and Eutyches, with its strong insistence that the subject of the Incarnation is the divine Word, as well as its emphasis that the birth was a real human birth. The passages therefore illustrate the two births of Christ, which Leo has made the foundation of the Tome's Christology, establishing the identity of Christ as the Son of God and the human reality of his life as Son of Man.

Impassibility and Passibility in the Incarnation

1. Vv 54–76: 'The Impassible takes on Passibility *Salua igitur proprietate utriusque naturae...Ita forma Dei serui forma non minuit.*'

   [vv 54–60] Thus (*igitur*) what is distinctive in each nature having been preserved and come together in a single person,[120] lowliness was taken up by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity. To pay off the debt of our state, invulnerable nature was united to a nature that could suffer; so that in a way that corresponded to the remedies we needed, one and the same Mediator between God and man, the man

---

[120] V 54: *Salua igitur proprietate utriusque naturae* (*Tr* 21.2; *naturae* has been sub-stituted for *substantiae* in the original, clearly to avoid problems in Greek translation).

Christ Jesus, is able to die in one [nature] and is unable to die in the other.[121]

[vv 61–71] Therefore (*ergo*) true God was born in the whole and perfect nature of true man, whole in what is his and whole in what is ours.[122] By 'ours' we mean what the Creator established in us from the beginning and what he took upon himself to restore. There was in the Saviour no trace of the things which the Deceiver brought upon us, and to which deceived humanity gave admittance. His subjection to human weaknesses in common with us did not mean that he shared our sins. He assumed the form of a servant without the stain of sin, increasing the human not diminishing the divine, because that emptying by which the invisible displayed himself as visible and the creator and lord of all things chose to make himself one of the mortals, was a bending down in mercy not a failure in power.[123]

[vv 72–6] Accordingly (*proinde*) the one who, remaining in the form of God when he made man, was made man in the form of a servant.[124] For each of the natures retains its own character without defect and just as the form of God does not detract from the form of a servant so the form of a servant does not lessen the form of God.[125]

This section is made up of three solid quotations (vv 54–60, 61–71, 72–6) from his Christmas sermons of 440 and 442. It

[121] V 60: *et mori posset ex uno et mori non posset ex altero* (*Tr* 21.2; *mori non posset* has replaced *resurgere posset* in the original; as Arens remarks *Die christologische Sprache* 319, this is a more accurate statement about the divine nature).

[122] Vv 61–2: *In integra ergo ueri hominis perfectaque natura uerus natus est Deus, totus in suis, totus in nostris* (*Tr* 23.2); note the similarity to the Palm Sunday sermon of 442 *tota est in maiestate humilitas, tota in humilitate maiestas* (*Tr* 54.1) and the Good Fri. sermon of 444, *Tr* 72.5; see also his *Ep* 35 to Julian of Cos, 13 Jun. 449, ST 6, TD 15, 15.

[123] Vv 68–70: *Adsumpsit formam serui sine sorde peccati humana augens, diuina non minuens, quia exinanitio illa qua se inuisibilis uisibilem praebuit et creator ac dominus omnium rerum unus uoluit esse mortalium inclinatio fuit miserationis non defectio potestatis.* (*Tr* 23.2; *augens* has been substituted for *prouehens* in the original probably as Arens, *Die christologische Sprache*, 379–80 suggests to convey the idea of creation as well as elevation; the clause *creator . . . mortalium* is an addition with the same intention); compare with his Christmas sermon of 440, *Tr* 21.1, on sinlessness and Good Fri. 444, *Tr* 72.5, on dispensation of mercy not deprivation of power.

[124] Vv 72–3: *Proinde qui manens in forma Dei fecit hominem, in forma serui factus est homo.*

[125] Vv 74–6: *Tenet enim sine defectu proprietatem suam utraque natura, et sicut formam serui Dei forma non adimit, ita formam Dei serui forma non minuit* (*Tr* 23.2).

therefore reflects issues that had preoccupied Leo at the start of his preaching career, addressing the problems raised by the need to defend divine simplicity in the Incarnation. To safeguard divine immutability, Nestorius and Leporius divided the divine and human in Christ into two subjects and therefore two identities. The accusation against Eutyches was that he depicted God suffering by making the Word the subject of the acts of Christ's life. Having established by his account of the two births that Christ is truly God and also truly man, Leo now has to address the problem raised by both Nestorius and Eutyches of divine impassibility.

Most commentators read this part of the Tome as a statement about the *persona* of Christ, foreshadowing Chalcedon.[126] Though his first quotation[127] refers to the one *persona* of Christ and describes him as the Mediator who can die in one nature but cannot die in the other, Leo does not develop the idea of Christ as the *persona* uniting two natures at this point; indeed as he begins the second quotation, there is a change in subject from the *persona* to *Deus*, which continues with the relative pronoun in the third quotation.[128] Apart from the one clause referring to the Mediator, the subject of most of the verbs is God, not the *persona* of Christ. An interesting comparison might be made with his Palm Sunday sermon of 442, which has many of the same ideas and even similar phrases but reaches a firmer resolution on the unity of Christ as one agent.[129] Leo did not use that sermon, which stressed the unity of Christ, but preferred quotations that dwelt on the integrity of the two natures.

The division of the passage into three parts, which are the three quotations, is brought out by connectives: *igitur*, *ergo*, and *proinde*. The most decisive evidence to establish what Leo is saying here is the way he handles his second and third quotations

---

[126] Nicolas, 'La doctrine,' 638–40, 645–50; Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 1, 531–2; Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 230–3.

[127] *Tr* 21.2.

[128] Sellers, *Chalcedon*, misrepresents who is the subject of the quotations on pp. 230, 237.

[129] *Tr* 54.1.

(vv 61–71, 72–6). They are a continuous passage from the 442 Christmas sermon,[130] but Leo takes two sentences (vv 72–6) from earlier in the sermon and places them at the end. Thus, as he presents these quotations in the Tome, the opening and closing sentence of each emphasises divine immutability and yet the reality of the human nature. The structure of the entire passage is shaped by the message that the union of the natures in no way impairs their integrity. This repudiates both Nestorius, who wanted to separate the divine from the human to safeguard the divine, and Eutyches, who wanted to assimilate the human to the divine, thereby imperilling both.

2. Vv 77–93: 'Why the Impassible takes on Passibility *Nam quia gloriabatur diabolus…Ita homo non consumitur dignitate.*'

   Just as Leo offered a soteriological reason for the two births, he now offers a soteriological reason for the Impassible taking on passibility. He returns to his earlier theme that God's fundamental purpose towards humanity demanded their deliverance from the Devil and therefore God assumed mortal nature, though a sinless nature taken from the Virgin. This section comprises a lengthy quotation from the Christmas sermon of 441,[131] reinforced by phrases from later in the sermon[132] and from the Christmas sermon of 443.[133] Where earlier, talking of the two births, Leo had said that the sinlessness of Christ derived from his divinity, now, talking of the distinction of the passible and impassible, he turns the significance of Christ's sinlessness around and makes the point that, being sinless, his humanity is not a defilement for the divinity. Leo is therefore making both the point that God had to take on mortality to overcome the Devil and also that God underwent no defilement in the mortal humanity he undertook. This is stressed in a sentence that Leo adds to the tesserae of quotations he has put together here: 'for as God is not changed by the mercy [he shows] so the man is not consumed by the dignity [he receives].'[134]

---

[130]   *Tr* 23.2.   [131]   Vv 77–88: *Tr* 22.1–2.   [132]   Vv 89–90: *Tr* 22.3.

[133]   Vv 90–1: *Tr* 24.3.

[134]   Vv 92–3: *Sicut enim Deus non mutatur miseratione, ita homo non consumitur dignitate.*

It is clear then that this whole section is intended to show that the natures preserve their own distinctive characteristics in the Incarnation. Leo does, however, hint at the idea of mediation, that the divine is demonstrated in the human, that humility is not the opposite of majesty but its human expression. He started this series of quotations with the passage from his first Christmas sermon on Christ the Mediator, lowliness assumed by majesty, weakness by power, mortality by eternity.[135] He ends this section with a similar passage from the second Christmas sermon, describing the new order in which, without receding from the Father's glory, the Son entered this lower world, the invisible becoming visible, the incomprehensible becoming comprehended, remaining before time and yet beginning to be in time, the impassible becoming passible,[136] and adds to it a new phrase: 'the humility of man and the loftiness of God are in each other.'[137]

The Duality of the Natures in Christ

1. Vv 94–125: 'The Distinctiveness of the Two Natures *Agit enim utraque forma . . . est aequalis cum Patre diunitas.*'

[vv 94–7] Each form does what is proper to it in communion with the other: that is, the Word performs what belongs to the Word, and the flesh accomplishes what belongs to the flesh. One of them shines with miracles; the other succumbs to injuries. As the Word does not withdraw from the equality of the glory of the Father, so neither does the flesh relinquish the nature of our race.

[vv 98–102] We must say this again and again: one and the same is truly Son of God and truly son of man. God, by the fact that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (Jn 1.1); man, by the fact that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.' (Jn 1.14) God, by the fact that 'all things were made through him, and nothing was made without him,' (Jn 1.3) man, by the fact that 'he was made of a woman, made under the law.' (Gal 4.4)

[vv 103–15] The birth of flesh is a manifestation of human nature; birth from a virgin is a sign of divine power. The infancy of the child is

---

[135] V 56: *Tr* 21.2.   [136] Vv 87–8: *Tr* 22.2.
[137] V 91: *in inuicem sunt et humilitas hominis et altitudo diuinitatis.*

shown by a lowly cradle; the greatness of the most High is announced by the angels' voices. Herod evilly strives to kill one who was like an ungrown human being, but it is the Lord of all whom the Magi rejoice to adore in supplication. And when he came to be baptised by his precursor John, lest it should not be known that the Divinity was covered by the veil of flesh, the Father's voice spoke thunder from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' (Mt 3.17) Accordingly, the one whom the Devil craftily tempts as a man is the same one whom the angels dutifully wait on as God. To hunger, to thirst, to grow weary and to sleep are patently human. But to satisfy five thousand men with five loaves; to dispense living water to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4.10), a drink of which will stop her being thirsty ever again; to walk on the surface of the sea with feet that do not sink (Mt 14.25); having rebuked the storm, to level the mounting waves (Lk 8.24) are unambiguously divine.

[vv 116–25] So, if I may pass over many points, it does not belong to the same nature to weep with feelings of pity for a dead friend (Jn 11.35) and, once the mound had been removed from the four-day-old grave, with a voice of command to call him back to life again; or to hang on the cross and, with light changed into night, to make all the elements tremble; or to be pierced by nails and to open the gates of paradise for the faith of the thief (Mt 27.35). Likewise, it does not belong to the same nature to say, 'I and the Father are one,' (Jn 10.30) and to say, 'The Father is greater than I.' (Jn 14.28) For although there is one person of God and man in the Lord Christ Jesus, that whence contumely is common in both is one thing, that whence glory is common to both is another. For from us he gets a humanity which is less than the Father; from the Father he gets a divinity which is equal to the Father.

This section is foreign to the characteristic emphases of Leo's theology. In five years of preaching, between 440–5, though Leo was always careful to preserve the distinctiveness of the natures of Christ, one of his principal aims had been to coordinate their contribution to salvation. As he considered the temptations in the wilderness or the agony in the garden or the crucifixion, he kept coming back to the way that Christ had to be both human and divine to save the world. In this section of the Tome, however, he presented a very different emphasis: that the two natures can be seen to be distinct in

the way that Christ acts. Facing two heresies each of which, he believed, saw only one nature in Christ, Leo had to devote a great deal of energy to asserting the duality of natures in Christ. He makes an emphatic statement of intent in a freshly composed passage (vv 98–102) where he threads together four Christological texts from the New Testament: 'We must say this again and again: one and the same is truly Son of God and truly son of man.' Had Leo's aim simply been to refute Eutyches, it would not have been necessary to insist on the divinity of Christ and quote Jn 1.1 and Jn 1.3. The balancing of the texts shows that his aim was to refute Nestorius as well as Eutyches.

Leo wants to show that the two natures can be seen to be distinct in the way Christ acts. It is not surprising that, apart from the opening two sentences which are a quotation from his Palm Sunday sermon of 442,[138] Leo had to look elsewhere to find inspiration. He adapted (vv 103–15) a passage from an anti-Arian sermon of Gaudentius of Brescia,[139] which he had already used in his Lent sermon of 442;[140] he had quoted another of his sermons in his Palm Sunday sermon of 443.[141] He reinforced this with another newly composed passage (vv 116–25): he had never distributed Christ's acts in this way before. The acts are divided between divine and human partly in what is appropriate to each, safeguarding the divine, and partly in how they can be perceived, so that both natures can be recognised.[142] Leo reviews not only events on which he has preached—the Nativity, the Epiphany, the temptations, the crucifixion—he adds to them episodes that had scarcely featured in the sermons—the Baptism, the feeding of the five thousand, the encounter with the Samaritan woman, the walking on the sea and calming of the storm, the raising of Lazarus.

Here there is no suggestion that there are two subjects in Christ. The duality is not presented as two natures acting separately but rather the divine working in the human—so on

---

[138] Vv 94–7: *Tr* 54.2.   [139] Vv 103–15: Gaudentius, *Tr* 19, *CSEL* 68, 165–7.
[140] *Tr* 40.3A.   [141] Gaudentius, *Tr* 12.5 in Leo, *Tr* 56.1.
[142] Sellers observes this: *Chalcedon*, 241–5.

the cross, as Christ is transfixed with nails in his humanity, he opens the gates of paradise to the thief in his divinity. This will be reinforced a little later when, looking at the soteriological significance of the duality of the natures[143] as he had looked at the soteriological significance of the two births or the mediation of impassibility into the passible, Leo did not claim that they saved mankind by being separate but rather that it was necessary that both natures should be recognised and believed.

This of course is not the impression conveyed by the notorious two sentences with which this section opens: 'Each form does what is proper to it in communion with the other.'[144] This appears to assert that there are two agents in Christ. It was sufficiently puzzling to Greek translators that even in Leo's time *forma* was being rendered in some translations in the dative, as though the Latin were an ablative, with Christ as the subject of *agit*.[145] The two forms are described as the Word and the flesh, which makes the equivalence of the flesh along with the Word as a subject of Christ's actions all the more notable. Cyril's fourth anathema had condemned the attribution of Christ's acts to two different *prosopa* or *hypostaseis*; the Formula of Reunion had justified the traditional distribution of the acts as the work of theologians who recognise that some are appropriate to the divinity and others appropriate to the humanity. While the rest of this section of the Tome appears to be entirely in accordance with the Reunion Formula, this sentence does appear to contradict Cyril's fourth anathema.

Attempts to interpret the sentence fail to note how unusual it is in the corpus of Leo's work and therefore fail to consider why Leo inserted it here.[146] First, in its context in the Passion

[143] Vv 133–51.

[144] V 94: *Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est, Uerbo scilicet operante quod Uerbi est et carne exequente quod carnis est* (*Tr* 54.2).

[145] L. Prestige, 'The Greek Translation of the Tome of St Leo,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, 31 (1930), 183–4.

[146] Nicolas, 'La doctrine,' 641–4; Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 247–8; Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 1, 534–6; Leo, who used *forma*, *natura*, and *substantia* indiscriminately, was of course ignorant of Aristotle's *Physics* and so could not have had any technical understanding of nature as a principle of motion in itself as Boethius later interpreted the term: see

Sunday sermon of 442, it is a false note in what is otherwise a well crafted account of the distinction and cooperation of the two natures. Secondly, though Phil 2.6–7 can either be read to stress the duality of natures in Christ or the single agency of the divine Word taking the form of a servant, on only two other occasions does Leo use the text to point to a distinction between the divine and human acts of Christ, in the Lent and Good Friday sermons of 453,[147] and in both cases he is careful to say that the acts can be seen to be human or divine, not that there are two agents. Every other time he alludes to the passage, he speaks of the single agency of the divine Word in two forms.[148] The passage is unique.

In fact, of course, Leo does not envisage two agents in Christ. His use of the neuter in the next sentence—one shines with miracles and the other succumbs to injuries[149]—probably does not take up 'Verbum' but is intended to show that the forms are not to be seen as personal agents. It was probably Leo's desire to quote himself that led him to search for a place where he did distribute the acts of Christ between the two natures and, unfortunately, he failed to observe the pitfall of apparently proclaiming two agents in Christ. Most commentators explain away Leo's blunder by appealing to his view of the *persona* of Christ as the single subject of all the acts human and divine;[150] in fact, the evidence points the other way. Despite Leo's well-developed understanding of Christ's *persona*, his failure to emphasise it

H. Chadwick, *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981), 191–2.

[147] *Tr* 46.2 (1 Mar. 453), *Tr* 66.4 (Good Fri. 453).

[148] *Tr* 21.2 (Christmas 440), 31.2 (Epiphany 441), 53.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 441), 22.2, 3 (Christmas 441), 77.2, 5 (Pentecost 442), 23.2 (Christmas 442), 24.2 (Christmas 443), 34.1 (Christmas 444), 59.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 444), 72.4 (Good Fri. 444), 25.2 (Christmas 444), 51.6 (Transfiguration 445), 74.1 (Ascension 445), 27.1 (Christmas 451), 62.1 (Palm Sun. 452), 63.4 (Wed. of Holy Week 452), 28.1 (Christmas 452), 46.1 (Lent 453), 65.3 (Wed. of Holy Week 453), 91.2 (Sep. Fast 453), 67.6 (Palm Sun. 454), 69.3, 5 (Holy Sat. Vigil 454), 30.5, 6 (Christmas 454).

[149] V 95: *unum horum coruscat miraculis aliud subcumbit iniuriis* (*Tr* 54.2); see v 123 *Aliud tamen est unde in utroque communis est contumelia aliud unde communis est gloria.*

[150] Nicolas, 'La doctrine christologique,' 644–50; Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 248; Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 1, 536.

in the Tome is very striking. The penultimate sentence of this section opens with only the second reference to Christ's *persona* in the Tome and it is introduced with the concessive 'although': 'For although there is one person of God and man in the Lord Christ Jesus, that whence contumely is common in both is one thing, that whence glory is common to both is another'.[151] Leo is not interested in describing the single agent in Christ in addressing Nestorius and Eutyches; he is interested rather in asserting the duality of natures in Christ. That urgent preoccupation made him tone deaf to that false note here.

2. Vv 126–32: 'The Communication of Idioms *Propter hanc ergo unitatem personae*…"*numquam dominum gloriae crucifixissent.*"'

Just as Leo had to look to an anti-Arian work of Gaudentius for a text to illustrate the distinction of the natures, so he has to look to an anti-Arian work of Augustine, one he had not previously quoted, for a suitable quotation[152] to sum up the *communicatio idiomatum*. This, even more than the distinction of the natures, is a manner of speaking foreign to Leo. It is presented as the necessary counterbalance to the emphasis on the difference between the natures but it is a counterbalance that Leo has not found it necessary to state before. It is only possible to speak of the communication of idioms because of the unity of Christ's person: one subject of action to be recognised in both natures.[153] It is notable that of course it only goes one way—it is the Son of God who is born and crucified—and the quotation is very careful to say that he does not experience these things in his divinity but in the weakness of human nature. This does not address the supposed heresy of Eutyches. It was not Eutyches who would find the *communicatio idiomatum* an unpalatable doctrine but rather Nestorius.

---

[151] Vv 122–3: *Quamuis enim in domino Iesu Christo Dei et hominis una persona sit, aliud tamen est unde in utroque communis est contumelia, aliud unde communis est gloria.*

[152] Vv 126–31: Augustine, *C Serm Arianorum* 8, PL 42.688.

[153] V 126: *Propter hanc ergo unitatem personae in utraque natura intelligendam.*

3. Vv 133–51: 'Faith in the Two Natures *Cum autem ipse dominus noster . . . et Verbum confiteremur et carnem.*'

[vv 133–40] And when our Lord and Saviour himself was instructing the faith of his disciples by questioning them, he says, 'Who do people say I, the Son of Man, am?' And when they had stated various opinions of other people, he says, 'But who do you say I am?'—in other words, 'I who am the Son of Man and whom you behold in the form of a servant and in real flesh: Who do you say I am?' (Mt 16.13–8) Whereupon the blessed Peter, inspired by God and about to benefit all peoples by his confession, says, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Not undeservedly was he declared 'blessed' by the Lord. He derived the stability of both his strength and his name from the original Rock, for when the Father revealed it to him, he confessed that the same one is both the Son of God and also the Christ.

[vv 141–2] Accepting one of these truths without the other did not profit for salvation. It was equally dangerous to have believed that the Lord Jesus Christ was either only God and not man, or solely man and not God.

[vv 143–51] After the Lord's resurrection—which was certainly the resurrection of a real body, since the one brought back to life is none other than the one who had been crucified and had died—what other reason was there for the forty-day delay than to make our faith complete and to cleanse it of all darkness? Thus he talked to his disciples and lived and ate with them, and let himself be touched carefully and inquisitively by those who were gripped by doubt. For this reason, he went in among his disciples when the doors were locked, and bestowed the holy Spirit by breathing on them, and opened the secrets of the holy scriptures after enlightening their understanding. Again, he would point out the wound in his side, the holes made by the nails, and all the signs of the suffering he had just recently undergone, saying, Look at my hands and feet: it is I. Feel and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. (Lk 24.39) All this was so that the distinct properties of the divine and human nature might be recognised remaining inseparably in him and that thus we might know that the Word is not what the flesh is so as to confess that the one Son of God is both Word and flesh.

The previous two sections, on the two births and the impassible taking on passibility, both ended with an explanation of their soteriological significance. So too does this section on the

duality of the natures. Picking up then the way he described the two natures as something to be acknowledged in the acts of Christ, Leo goes on to make the soteriological point that, to receive salvation, Christ must be recognised in faith as both God and man. The first part of the passage[154] echoes his sermon on the Transfiguration and it culminates in the quotation from Hilary's commentary on Matthew which he quotes in the sermon,[155] insisting that it is dangerous to believe in one nature without the other because one truth accepted without the other will not lead to salvation. He therefore opens with Peter's confession of the Christ at Caesarea Philippi, as the point at which the two natures are acknowledged—a somewhat abbreviated account of the episode, now entirely omitting the prophecy of the passion and the rebuke of Peter.[156] It has been a constant theme in the sermons that some people—the Magi, Peter, the good thief—have faith and recognise Christ as the Son of God, whereas others—Herod, Judas, the Jews—do not. This faith is essential to receive the forgiveness bestowed on the good thief on the cross; without it, there is only futility and despair.

Leo goes on to describe the risen Christ,[157] displaying both divinity and humanity. He shows them his hands and feet, 'so that the distinct properties of the divine and human nature might be recognised remaining inseparably in him and that thus we might know that the Word is not what the flesh is so as to confess that the one Son of God is both Word and flesh.'[158] This takes up ideas found in his Good Friday sermon of 444, where he claimed that those who did not have a true faith in the incarnation, acknowledging both natures in Christ, were separated from the feast of Easter,[159] and the Ascension sermon

[154] Vv 133–42.

[155] Vv 141–2: Hilary, *Cm Mt* 16.9, PL 9.1009–11; Leo, *Tr* 51.1.

[156] It resembles the Accession Anniversary sermon of 444, *Tr* 4.2.

[157] Vv 143–51.

[158] Vv 150–1: *ut agnosceretur in eo proprietas diuinae humanaeque naturae indiuidua permanere, et ita sciremus Uerbum non hoc esse quod carnem ut unum Dei filium et Uerbum confiteremur et carnem.*

[159] *Tr* 72.5—a passage which echoes the part of the Christmas sermon of 442, *Tr* 23.2, quoted in the Tome, vv 68–70.

of 444, where he described the appearances of the risen Christ as instruction, teaching, and confirmation of the faith of the disciples.[160]

As Leo concludes this section, he has come all the way from the two births to the resurrection. On the way, he insisted on the need for Christ to be both impassible and passible in order to be innocent and to overcome the Devil and reviewed a series of salvific events in Christ's life from his birth to his crucifixion as revealing the two natures. One thing is plain: Leo is arguing throughout that Christ has to be God and man to save the world but he is not urging that the natures act apart from each other for salvation; rather, it is by the coordination and relationship of the natures that salvation is achieved.

The Dangers of Eutyches' Errors and the Verdict upon Them

1. Vv 152–76: 'The implications of Eutyches' ideas *Quo fidei sacramento . . . nec sine uera credatur diuinitas.*'

With the same easy artistry with which he had moved from each section into the next, Leo now turns his attention back to Eutyches who was named in the introduction, used as a rhetorical device in introducing the creed and scriptural citations, and then finally mentioned in a discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the Nativity. He is now accused of having no grasp of the *sacramentum fidei* and of flouting 1 Jn 4.2–3, dissolving Christ, and therefore being the antichrist. The attack is now focused, Nestorius is forgotten, and the concrete issues of 449 are addressed. Eutyches' denial of Christ's humanity means that he must deny the reality of the crucifixion. Threading his way through a series of quotations from 1 Peter and 1 John, Leo argues that this in turn leads to a denial of the establishment of the sacaments in the water and blood that flowed from the side of the crucified Christ, the denial of the truth of Christ's bloody immolation, and of the three witnesses of the Spirit, the water and the blood (1 Jn 5.6–8), the Spirit of sanctification, the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. The allegations are

---

[160] *Tr* 73.1–3.

clear enough. By denying that Christ is truly human, Eutyches has undermined the whole saving work of the cross and of the sacraments.

Though these are both letters that Leo often cites, this seems to be the only occasion that Leo quotes these particular verses except for 1 Jn 4.2–3, which also appear in his anti-Manichaean Epiphany sermon of 444.[161] There too he had observed that the denial of Christ's humanity led the Manichees to deny the crucifixion and the institution of baptism in the water that flowed from Christ's side.[162] In other words, as Leo turns his attention to the implications of Eutyches' failure to accept the full humanity of Christ, he turns to the battery of arguments he had assembled against the Manichaeans in 443–4. This only underlines the extent to which Leo had decided to do more than attack Eutyches in the Tome. Had Eutyches been his sole adversary, Leo would simply have deployed that tried and tested battery against him, producing a document which demonstrated that Christ was human and had to be human to save mankind. Instead, the document he wrote shows that his purpose was to assert the duality of natures in Christ against both Eutyches and Nestorius.

2. Vv 177–205: 'The Correction of Eutyches *Cum autem ad interlocutionem examinis uestri . . . sui prauitate saluetur.*'

As Leo moves back to advising Flavian about how to correct and, if possible, convert Eutyches, he focuses on the statement made at the trial that perplexed him most—Eutyches' acknowledgement of two natures before the union and one after. He eschews speculation about what the two natures before could be, though his private suspicion was that Eutyches must have had some sort of belief in a pre-existent humanity that was taken up by the divine and ceased to have any distinct existence.[163] Rather, he laments that Eutyches had not been more sharply rebuked for this error at the trial. Nevertheless, he ends the letter with words of encouragement that Eutyches might yet be persuaded to repent.

---

[161] *Tr* 34.5.   [162] *Tr* 34.4.
[163] E.g. *Ep* 35 to Julian of Cos, ST 6, TD 15, 16–17.

Leo's Changing View of Nestorius

The Tome was a far more ambitious and far more accomplished theological work than either of the tracts he had written in 447, letters 15 and 16. It was Leo's attempt, not only in the realm of ecclesiastical politics but also in the realm of theology, to atone for Celestine's failure to act more decisively in the Nestorian crisis in 430–1. Celestine had been entirely overshadowed by Cyril and had proved unable to produce any coherent critique of Nestorius or statement of true doctrine comparable with Cyril's letters. Rome had wanted to play a more active part, as is shown by Leo's commissioning of Cassian's *De Incarnatione*, but found they could do no more than delegate the prosecution of Nestorius to Cyril. It is likely that, however delighted they had been with the Formula of Reunion in 433, they remembered the dispute between Alexandria and Antioch which followed Ephesus with regret. When Eutyches disputed the Formula of Reunion, therefore, and complained about Nestorianising influences in the Eastern capital, Leo saw his chance to say what should have been said in 430. It can therefore be read as Leo's attempt to resolve the Christological controversy both of 428 and of 448, a grand replacement of the Formula of Reunion.

Unfortunately, Leo still misconstrued what had been the real issue in 428–31. His view of Nestorius as an adoptionist whose beliefs were tantamount to a denial of Christ's divinity and Eutyches as an Apollinarian or Origenist who effectively denied his humanity led him to venture into territory strange to him, above all an elaborate account of the distinction between the natures which owed a great deal to the anti-Arian polemic of earlier generations. Leo sustained this view throughout the bitter disappointments of the Robber Council of 449 when the Tome was not even received and the negotiations afterwards that culminated in the Council of Chalcedon. In practice, however, Leo's response to what he saw as two one-nature Christologies made the Tome sound alarmingly Nestorian to the ears of many at Chalcedon, especially bishops from Egypt, Illyricum, and Palestine.

On 10 October 451, at the second sessions of the Council, while Leo's representatives must have been gratified by the acclamations after the Tome that Peter has spoken through Leo, they must have been disconcerted by repeated objections to the Tome from Illyrian

and Palestinian bishops.[164] They objected to three passages in particular:[165] the quotation from his first Christmas sermon which opens the section on the impassible taking on passibility and especially the suggestion that the Mediator might be capable of dying from one element and incapable from the other;[166] and two passages from the section where he distinguishes the natures, first the unfortunate *agit utraque forma*, which is a quotation from his Palm Sunday sermon of 442,[167] and secondly the attribution of contumely and glory to two different things in Christ (*aliud...aliud*) despite his being one Person.[168] These attacks were warded off by Aetius, the Archdeacon of Constantinople, and by Theodoret of Cyrus, each of whom quoted Cyril in support. A sharp retort came from Atticus of Nicopolis demanding that Cyril's Third Letter to Nestorius and the Twelve Anathemas should be read out—presumably both because Leo appeared to contravene the fourth anathema and, more profoundly, because the conciliar debate was now turning on the interpretation of Cyril. This effectively forestalled approval of the Tome till a later session and strengthened the hand of the imperial officials who were calling against strong oppositon for a new declaration of the faith.[169] Even more dramatically, when the Tome received the approval of the Council Fathers a week later at the fourth session, the Egyptian bishops pleaded to be excused from signing it on the grounds that they would suffer death on their return home if they did so.[170]

It was in response to this hostility to the Tome that the imperial commissioners decided to push for a doctrinal definition at Chalcedon and it was in the light of that that the Tome was accepted as an authoritative text.[171] Formal news of the outcome was dispatched

---

[164] Horn, *Petrou Kathedra*, 172–95; R. Price and M. Gaddis (eds.), *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol 2 (Liverpool, 2005), 24–6.

[165] Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 25–6.   [166] Vv 54–60, *Tr* 21.2.

[167] Vv 94–5, *Tr* 54.2.   [168] Vv 122–5.

[169] Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 9–11, 28.

[170] Ibid. 147–53; a savagely critical commentary on the Tome written by Timothy Aelurus between ten and fifteen years later, accusing Leo of Nestorianism, is translated by R.Y. Ebied and L.R. Wickham, 'Timothy Aelurus: Against the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon,' in C. Laga, J.A. Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (eds.), *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* (Leuven, 1985), 115–66.

[171] Sellers, *Chalcedon*, 116–27; Horn, *Petrou Kathedra*, 203–15.

to Leo at the start of November 451,[172] but perhaps he had already got some news of the stormy debates of the second and fourth sessions. It is likely that he had already heard something of the objections to his emphasis on the distinction of the two natures by late December 451, for his Christmas sermon and the Epiphany sermon of 452 stressed with unusual firmness the unity of the divine and human in one person in Christ.[173] Allowing roughly two months for news to reach Rome from Constantinople, perhaps Leo received a report before the Council ended.

Leo's main discovery was that his understanding of Nestorius was not that of the bishops assembled at Chalcedon. The accusations of Nestorianism flung against him at the Council only made sense when Nestorius' true weaknesses were exposed: an inability to articulate the union of the two natures in Christ. Leo learned this lesson very quickly. Leo was fully aware that Nestorius divided the natures in Christ; what mattered was how this was described. Was the human nature a man adopted by the divine, which was tantamount to saying that Nestorius denied Christ's divine identity; or were the natures two agents, acting separately, dividing Christ into two persons? Leo shifted from the first description to the second immediately after he received news of Chalcedon.

In January 452, he notified the bishops of Gaul about the Council and now described Nestorius as maintaining that the Virgin was the mother of the man only, later adopted (*susceptus*) by the divinity of the Word, and therefore preaching two persons, two Christs, two sons.[174] Though still regarding Nestorius as an adoptionist, Leo has clearly shifted the emphasis away from the denial of divinity to an erroneous assertion of duality. Instead of seeing Nestorius' real problem as the emphasis on humanity to the exclusion of divinity, effectively the assertion that Christ had only a human nature, by the January of 452 Leo was defining Nestorius' error as presenting the duality of natures as a duality of persons in Christ.

---

[172] *Inter Epp Leon* 98, *ACO* II.1.3, 116–18 (Greek), PL 54.951–7 (Latin).
[173] *Tr* 27.2, 37.1; these sermons contrast with the series delivered in 450–1, which are strikingly Augustinian in tone, preaching peace based on harmony of peoples' wills in love with God's will which restores the divine image that has been lost, e.g. *Tr* 12, 26.2, 26.5, 36.3–4, 44.2–3.
[174] *Ep* 102.2, *ACO* II.4, 54.

   This had become more precisely expressed by the end of 452. In
his Christmas Day sermon, he contrasted Nestorius who denied there
was a union of the Word and flesh in Christ with Eutyches who
acknowledged a union but maintained that in it only one nature
remained.[175] The following summer, 453, he wrote to Bishop Max-
imus of Antioch to say that Nestorius, separating (*seiungens*) the
natures of the Word and the flesh, dividing (*diuidens*) Christ in two,
distinguished two persons.[176] Some weeks later, he wrote his major
letter to the monks of Palestine, emphatically correcting the emphases
of the Tome by a strong assertion of the unity of the natures in the
one person of Christ, and describing Nestorius' error as the division
(*separatim atque seiunctim*) of two sons in Christ.[177] Nevertheless,
it was not easy for Leo to escape the accusations that the Tome
was Nestorian.[178] His revised account of Nestorius reached its most
lapidary formulation in a sermon in September 453: the Catholic
faith condemns Nestorius who divides the divine from the human
and detests Eutyches who obliterates the human in the divine.[179]
His depiction of Nestorius before and after Chalcedon was therefore
sharply different.

The Letter to the Palestinian Monks: *Ep* 124

Two years after Chalcedon, Leo produced a defence of the Tome
which amounted to a second major Christological statement. It took
the form of a letter to the monks of Palestine and reflected not only
the attacks levelled against the Tome at Chalcedon but also the dra-
matic change in Leo's understanding of Nestorius and, therefore, of
the whole map of Christological argument that had unfolded over the
previous twenty-five years. A comparison of this letter with the Tome
reveals both how Leo's thinking had shifted but also a return to some

---

   [175] *Tr* 28.5.   [176] *Ep* 119, ST 42, TD 20, 109–10.
   [177] *Ep* 124, *ACO* II.4, 159.
   [178] See three letters sent on 10 Mar. 454: *Ep* 129, to Proterius of Alexandria ST 55,
TD 20, 141; *Ep* 130 to Marcian ST 54, TD 20, 139–40; *Ep* 131 to Julian of Cos ST 56,
TD 20, 143–4.
   [179] *Tr* 91.2: *damnans Nestorium diuina ab homine diuidentem, detestans Eutichen in
diuinis humana uacuantem.*

of his more characteristic theological tendencies. It also demonstrates the real purpose of the Tome.

A monastic rebellion greeted the Palestinian bishops on their return home from Chalcedon.[180] The hierarchy was overthrown in 452 and the monk Theodosius was elected as the new patriarch of Jerusalem. Even when Juvenal, the deposed patriarch, returned and claimed his see in 453, the schism continued. There was a complex of factors that divided the Palestinian Church but a theological rift separated those who claimed that their loyalty to Cyril precluded the Formula of Reunion, the Tome, and the Chalcedonian definition, and those who admitted those texts as compatible with pure Cyrillian teaching.[181] The imperial policy towards the schism had been conciliatory at first but Marcian finally restored Juvenal by force, having demanded the dismissal of the bishops appointed by the usurper Theodosius, who fled into Sinai.[182]

This was a deeply unsatisfactory situation in which Leo felt his authority challenged and his pastoral concern engaged. He saw himself as having a universal pastoral mission and was preoccupied above all with the doctrinal aspects of the schism.[183] He had little sympathy for Juvenal,[184] whose ambitions for his diocese had long placed him at the intersection of disputes between Alexandria and Antioch and who had played a major part in the Robber Council. He also made no attempt to defend the authority of Chalcedon, to which he scarcely even referred,[185] though of course he had refused to endorse the Council because it elevated Constantinople to second place after Rome.[186] But he saw the monks as the cause of the disturbances,

---

[180] L. Perrone, *La Chiesa di Palestina e le Controversie Christologiche* (Brescia, 1980), 90–100; F. Winkelmann, 'Papst Leo I und die sog. Apostasia Palästinas,' *Klio*, 70 (1988), 167–75; C.B. Horn, *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian* (Oxford, 2006), 74–111.

[181] Perrone, 95–100; C. Horn, *Asceticism*, 91–2.   [182] Ibid. 101–2.

[183] Winkelmann, 'Papst Leo I und die sog.' 168–9.

[184] Perrone, *La Chiesa di Palestina*, 105–7; Winkelmann, 'Papst Leo I und die sog.' 174.

[185] Ibid. 173.

[186] His letters to Marcian, Pulcheria, and Anatolius of Constantinople are very forthright: *Ep* 104, 105, 106, ST 37, 38, 39, TD 20, 93–105; he rebuked Julian of Cos very sharply for assenting to Canon 28: *Ep* 107, ST 40, TD 20, 105–6; A. Wuyts, 'Le canon 28ième canon de Chalcédoine et le Fondement du Primat romain,' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 17 (1951), 265–82; Horn, *Petrou Kathedra*, 224–50.

not servants of Christ but soldiers of the antichrist, with no right to
teach doctrine because they were merely laymen.[187] Leo was facing
again the monastic challenge to episcopal authority that had taxed his
predecessors at the end of the preceding century and had contributed
to the development of the Roman episcopal and clerical style.

The crisis had a profound effect on Leo's preaching. In 451–2, he
had repeated a number of themes that appeared in the Tome—it
was equally dangerous to deny our nature in Christ as to deny his
equality with the Father's glory,[188] the two births of Christ who is son
of the Virgin and creator of his mother,[189] the Son of God assumed
our characteristics without loss of his own,[190] the two natures come
together in one Person,[191] Christ is the Mediator,[192] the Devil is over-
come by Christ's innocence on the cross.[193] Other themes omitted
from the Tome are given fresh emphasis: the natures are united to
unite humanity and God,[194] God's humility is expressed in Christ,[195]
Christ makes believers into sons of Abraham,[196] Christ is the head of
the body of the saints,[197] believers are renewed in Christ's image,[198]
the Creed is a source of doctrine.[199] Most of this was an implicit
defence of the Tome. The Palestinian schism, however, forced him
to address the problems that his critics had identified in the Tome,
especially the relationship between Christ's two natures in action.

Throughout the 452–3 cycle, Leo repeatedly attacked heresies
against the Incarnation: he offered a review of heretical ideas[200]
and explicitly attacked Nestorius and Eutyches, now recognising that
the important consequence of Nestorius' insistence that the Virgin
was mother only of the man was to deny any real unity of the
natures,[201] whereas Eutyches believed that the union obliterated the
humanity. He struck out against people who assailed the truth of

---

[187] Winkelmann, 'Papst Leo I und die sog.,' 172; C. Horn, *Asceticism*, 112–96.
[188] *Tr* 27.1 (Christmas 451).   [189] *Tr* 27.2, 62.2 (Palm Sun. 452).
[190] *Tr* 27.1–2   [191] *Tr* 27.2, 37.1 (Epiphany 452), 62.1.
[192] *Tr* 63.2 (Wed. of Holy Week 452).   [193] *Tr* 62.3.   [194] *Tr* 37.1, 63.1.
[195] *Tr* 37.2–3, 62.1.   [196] *Tr* 63.2, 6.   [197] *Tr* 63.3.
[198] *Tr* 27.6, 45.2 (Lent 452), 63.4.   [199] *Tr* 62.2.
[200] *Tr* 28.4 (Christmas 452).
[201] *Tr* 28.5: *Nam ille beatam Mariam uirginem hominis tantummodo ausus est
praedicare genetricem, ut in conceptu eius et partu nulla Verbi et carnis facta unitio
crederetur, quia Dei Filius non ipse factus sit hominis filius, sed creato homini sola se
dignatione sociauerit.*

the Incarnation[202] and especially against those who denied the reality of Christ's flesh.[203] It was in his September Fast sermon that he produced his epigrammatic definition of their errors: Nestorius separates the divine from the human and Eutyches obliterates the human in the divine.[204] This preoccupation with heresy displays the depth of Leo's anxiety about the failure of Chalcedon to gain universal acceptance.

A number of the sermons can therefore be read as polemic against the opposing heresies. The Christmas sermon of 452, for instance, starts by saying that the Son of God took human nature and so we should recognise our nature in him and that the natures cannot be separated.[205] This is directed against Nestorius. Then he went on to say that he did not assume a pre-existent body,[206] which was plainly directed against Eutyches. The Epiphany sermon of 453 stressed very strongly that the infant in the cradle reveals God's humility, that the Son of God is the Son of Man,[207] which is directed against both Nestorius' denial of the union and Eutyches' denial of the reality of Christ's humanity.

The acknowledgement of the true problem with Nestorius' Christology led Leo to assert the one *persona* of Christ to an extent he had never done before. The two natures come together in one person;[208] man is taken up into the Son of God and received into the unity of Christ's person, the same one in miracles as in dishonour;[209] there is one person of the two-fold nature in Christ;[210] the Word and the flesh are in one and the same person together;[211] all the actions of Christ are performed by one person.[212] This account of the *persona* is not composite; it is not made up of two separate realities. The Word remains Christ's identity and the agent effecting the union by creating

---

[202] *Tr* 64.1 (Palm Sun. 453).

[203] *Tr* 65.4 (Wed. of Holy Week 453), 66.3 (Good Fri. 453).   [204] *Tr* 91.2.

[205] *Tr* 28.1.   [206] *Tr* 28.2.   [207] *Tr* 38.1.

[208] *Tr* 28.3: *in unam personam gemina conueniente natura.*

[209] *Tr* 28.6: *Adsumptus igitur homo in Filium Dei, sic in unitatem personae Christi ab ipsis corporalibus est receptus exordiis, ut nec sine deitate conceptus sit, nec sine deitate editus, nec sine deitate nutritus. Idem erat in miraculis, idem in contumeliis.*

[210] *Tr* 46.1 (Lent 453): *Duplicis itaque in Christo formae una persona est, et Filius Dei idemque filius hominis unus est Dominus.*

[211] *Tr* 46.2: *in una eademque persona simul et caro nasceretur et Verbum*; 64.4 (Palm Sun. 453): *licet Verbi Dei et carnis una persona sit.*

[212] *Tr* 65.1 (Wed. of Holy Week 453): *unius personae fuerint totius temporis actiones.*

a new human life that would have no independent existence. Since the identity of the person of Christ is the Word, Leo concedes that though the Word is incapable of suffering he can be spoken of as the subject of Christ's sufferings.[213]

It is in this light that Leo addressed the problems about the actions of Christ and the relationship of the natures raised at Chalcedon. He offered three accounts of how the natures should be regarded in three different sermons. This was a subject that he had never previously spoken about in his sermons. In his Lent sermon for 453, he argued that divine and human acts show that Christ is both divine and human. Here, what matters is that the natures are discerned by the believer in the birth, the Epiphany, at Cana, the raising of Lazarus, healing the blind man, sleeping in the boat and calming the storm, feeding the five thousand; all of these acts show the one person of Word and flesh together.[214]

The second account argued that though the natures are distinct and make possible different parts of Christ's activity, they work together: the power of the Word enables the Virgin to conceive, the reality of the flesh allows the baby to be wrapped in swaddling clothes; the power of the Word enables the Magi to worship while the flesh allows the child to be taken to Egypt. He goes on to look at the Baptism, the healing of the sick and raising of the dead, Christ's hunger and tiredness, and the Johannine texts saying that Christ is equal to the Father (Jn 10.30) and the Father greater than him (Jn 14.28). This whole review is introduced by the observation that the Word and the flesh share one person and ends with the statement that the Son of God is both man and the Word.[215] Both of these passages are carefully calculated to allay the anxieties raised at Chalcedon.

The third account, however, insists that though all the actions are performed by one and the same person, the divine operations do not prejudice human ones and the human do not prejudice the divine,

---

[213] *Tr* 65.3: *Quod itaque Verbi caro patiebatur, non Verbi erat poena sed carnis, cuius iniuriae atque supplicia etiam ad inpassibilem redundabant, ut merito ei dicantur inlata, quae in ipsius sunt corpus admissa, dicente Apostolo:* 'Si enim cognouissent, numquam Dominum maiestatis crucifixissent.'

[214] *Tr* 46.2; the imperatives are noteworthy: *da, cognosce, confitere, intellege, adproba.*

[215] *Tr* 64.4.

for they are unconfused. They must be kept distinct without any doubling of the person.[216] This is a reinforcement of what Leo wanted to assert in the Tome: that the distinction of the acts was necessary to protect divine impassibility. What is striking though is that he insists that the *persona* of Christ is the single subject of all the acts and that there is no doubling of the person. Here, he is responding to the critics of the *agit utraque forma* passage of the Tome.

These sermons show that Leo accepted that the Tome had misfired, however much he insisted upon its authority. He knew that he had misunderstood Nestorius and had appreciated why his critics thought the Tome was Nestorian. Of course, these were realisations that he was not going to admit; but the shift of emphasis in these sermons and the production of a second Christological statement in the form of a letter to his critics amounted to a tacit admission that the Tome had not resolved the Christological disputes of the previous twenty years. The irony was, of course, that the most contentious passages in the Tome were those least typical of Leo's own theological concerns.

As a result of the new stress on the unity of Christ in the 452–3 cycle, Leo could deploy an array of soteriological images that depended on the two natures working together. The problem that he had faced over a decade before, of how to account for the role of the divinity in Christ's saving work, was now exuberantly resolved. Christ's life and death were the triumph of justice over the Devil[217] but now he was very clear that Christ's innocence depended entirely on his divinity.[218] The divine and human are not in competition: humility could not restore the human race without majesty and majesty could not restore it without humility.[219] Leo drew out the continuity between creation and salvation: since the Word is the creator, it was right that he too should be the restorer, so the Son is the member of the Trinity who became incarnate.[220] Christ is the high priest, the Mediator,[221] the first fruits of humanity,[222] and just as his humanity could not have been conceived without the divine, so he was crucified in weakness and raised in divine power.[223] Salvation is solidarity of humanity with God in Christ.[224]

---

[216] *Tr* 65.1. [217] *Tr* 64.2, 66.1. [218] *Tr* 28.3. [219] *Tr* 38.2.
[220] *Tr* 64.2. [221] *Tr* 64.3. [222] *Tr* 65.4. [223] *Tr* 28.6.
[224] *Tr* 66.4.

At what point in 453 Leo decided to compose a second major Christological statement, which was effectively a replacement and emendation of the Tome, is unknown. It is likely that he wrote it in the summer. In November 452, he wrote to Julian of Cos[225] who had clearly given him the first news of the Palestinian rebellion and said that he was sending Athanasius' Letter to Epictetus which Cyril had used at Ephesus against Nestorius.[226] He wrote to Julian again in March 453,[227] asking whether the unrest was subsiding and remarking that if they did not have faith in his teaching they should read Athanasius, Theophilus, and Cyril, all of whom agree with him.[228] It seems that Julian did not reply, for at the end of June Leo was again writing to him chiding him for not replying and asking for news.[229] At the same time, Leo was asked by the Emperor to admonish Eudocia, the widow of Theodosius II, who had settled in Palestine and was supporting the rebel monks.[230] He executed the task in the middle of June with a letter to Eudocia that made no mention of concern about her allegiances but enlisted her support against the dissidents.[231] Here, Leo made no reference to a letter to the monks. The evidence suggests therefore that Leo had not decided to write to the monks in the middle of June and did so on receipt of further news from Julian at some point after his short letter at the end of the month.

The decision to send a letter to the Palestinian monks was therefore taken after he had preached most of the annual cycle of sermons. Though they reflected his concern at the situation in Palestine, they were not delivered with a view towards being used in a new Christological document. As late as 21 March, three weeks after he had preached his Lent sermon and only a fortnight before he began the remarkable set of Holy Week sermons, he was still asking whether the unrest had subsided and hoping that the monks might see the harmony between the great Alexandrian bishops and his own teaching.[232] As in the years 440–5, therefore, the sermons were the vehicle by which he expanded and expressed his theological ideas and, as in 449, the resource on which he drew to construct a new statement. The letter was, however, a major venture, a second Tome. He repeated it

[225] *Ep* 109, ST 43, TD 20, 113–15.　　[226] Ibid. 114.

[227] *Ep* 117, ST 47, TD 20, 123–6.　　[228] Ibid. 125.

[229] *Ep* 125, *ACO* II.4, 78.　　[230] *Ep* 117, ST 47, TD 20, 124–5.

[231] *Ep* 123, ST 50, TD 20, 130–1.　　[232] *Ep* 117.

in a letter to the Emperor Leo in 458,[233] a document that is usually known as the Second Tome and which has attracted some attention.[234] The fact that it was *Epistle* 124 that he submitted as his final Christological statement reveals a good deal about its purpose and his post-Chalcedonian view of the original Tome.

The Ballerini edition[235] divides the letter to the Palestinian monks into nine chapters. Schwartz's edition,[236] the best text, divides it into four paragraphs. The divisions largely coincide. Schwartz's first paragraph corresponds to the Ballerinis' first four chapters and his last paragraph to their last two chapters; the Ballerinis' seventh chapter is the second half of Schwartz's third paragraph. Neither edition is divided at the start of the long quotation from Leo's Palm Sunday sermon of 453 which occurs in the middle of Schwartz's long first paragraph and the Ballerinis' third chapter; but the end of the quotation comes at the end of the Ballerinis' fifth chapter and in the middle of Schwartz's second paragraph. This is the only point of disagreement between the two editions. The Ballerinis start their sixth chapter at the point that the quotation ends and a short quotation from his sermon for the Wednesday of Holy Week begins; Schwartz's third paragraph opens at the end of the second quotation, two sentences later. Neither edition, of course, takes note of the quotations for, dealing with undated sermons, the editors did not know that they were prior to the letter. The Ballerini division makes perfectly reasonable sense of the content of the letter and seems preferable on structural grounds: it allows each of their chapters five, six, and seven to begin with the words *Quamuis ergo*. It can therefore safely be used in preference to Schwartz's paragraphs.

The Tome Defended (*ACO II.4, 159, lines 3–23*)

Leo opens by suggesting that the monks of Palestine have probably been misled by a false translation of the Tome.[237] He then says that although the Tome is clear enough and that his other writings are in

---

[233] *Ep* 165, ST 70, TD 9, 45–7.
[234] Grillmeier, *Christ*, vol 2, 149–66.
[235] PL 54.1061–8.
[236] *ACO* II.4, 159–63.
[237] He asked the Emperor Marcian to commission a fresh, accurate translation in Mar. 454, complaining about inaccurate versions that led to his being accused of Nestorianism: *Ep* 130, ST 54, TD 20, 139–40.

harmony with it, necessity requires him to argue against the heretics who have disturbed many Christian people and he has made clear to the princes, the holy council, and the Church of Constantinople what ought to be thought and felt on the Incarnation of the Word according to the evangelical and apostolic doctrine. Nestorius and Eutyches have both assailed the one Catholic faith from opposite standpoints and both have been condemned.

This is a significantly odd start to the letter. Though he has defended the Tome and excused critical readings of it on the basis of mistaken or malicious translations, he fails both to explain the relationship between it and this letter and the need for a second doctrinal statement. The reference to making clear to the princes, the Council, and the people of Constantinople what should be believed about the Incarnation only serves to divert attention from the Tome; these are the writings with which the Tome is in agreement, the letters to Pulcheria[238] and Theodosius,[239] to the synod,[240] and to the people of Constantinople[241] which are in harmony with the Tome. Implicitly, he is suggesting that this letter to the monks is just another letter which, like them, reinforces his doctrinal teaching. In fact, the letter to the Palestinian monks is on an entirely different scale of ambition and achievement. It is effectively a second Tome. It is thus clear from what Leo does not say that he realises that the Tome has missed its mark because he had failed to see what its true target should have been and so he is now offering a second attempt to resolve the Christological debates that have divided the East for twenty-five years.

Nestorius Who Doubles the Persons and Eutyches Who Confuses the Natures Should Both be Condemned (ACO II. 4, 159–60, lines 23–32, 1–13)

For over a year, Leo had recognised that Nestorius' error was to divide Christ into two. Here he repeats what he had already said in several places: that Nestorius regards Christ as two persons and two sons. This, of course, was the accusation levelled against him by the critics of the Tome. His defence is measured. First, he asserts the

---

[238] *Ep* 31, ST 4b, TD 15, 8–13.
[240] *Ep* 33, ST 8, TD 15, 19–21.
[239] *Ep* 69, ST 19, TD 15, 51–3.
[241] *Ep* 59, ST 15b, TD 15, 40–6.

immutability of the essence of the Word; then he claims that the Word became flesh in the Virgin's womb in one conception and one birth according to the union of the two substances; this means that the Virgin is both handmaid and mother of the Lord, quoting Elizabeth (Lk 1.43) and not needing to quote the Magnificat.[242]

This is a succinct and powerful response to his opponents. He has safeguarded divine simplicity, using the Augustinian coinage *essentia*, and accounted for how the Word could become flesh and so how Mary could be Theotokos by appealing to the union of the substances. It is different from his attack on Nestorius in the Tome, which relied on the two births of the Word. It indicates how far Leo's thinking about the *persona* of union in Christ had developed since 449.

He then turns to Eutyches. He is accused first of the third error of Apollinaris, the idea that Christ's humanity was formed out of a divine substance. He had already hinted or openly said that Eutyches was an Apollinarian or Manichaean on a number of occasions[243] and was not alone in the idea, as Flavian had accused him of holding these errors in his report after Eutyches' trial,[244] and significantly Eutyches had expressly rejected the allegation.[245] He spells out the charges: Eutyches holds that Christ has only one nature after the Incarnation. There are only two ways he can explain this. One is to embrace the Apollinarian heresy, which amounts to the belief that the Word changed in the Incarnation and that all the actions of Christ's life—conception and birth, being nursed and growing, being crucified and dying, being buried and rising again, and ascending to sit at the Father's hand until the second coming—were actions of the impassible and unchangeable nature that the Word shares with Father and Spirit. It is thus a denial of divine simplicity. The Manichaean error is the only alternative, the belief that Christ's body was a *phantasticam speciem*. So the only escape from the denial of divine simplicity is docetism.

---

[242] *cum manente illa incommutabilis uerbi essentia, quae ei cum patre et cum spiritu sancto intemporalis atque coaeterna est, ita intra uirginea uiscera uerbum caro sit factum, ut uno conceptu unoque partu eadem uirgo secundum unionem utriusque substantiae et ancilla domini esset et mater, quod etiam Elisabeth, sicut Lucas euangelista declarat, intellexit et dixit: unde hoc mihi ut ueniat mater domini mei ad me?*

[243] *Ep* 35, ST 6, TD, 15, 16–17; *Ep* 59, ST 15b, TD 15, 40–6; *Ep* 109, ST 43, TD 20, 113–15.

[244] *ACO* II.2.1, 21.   [245] *ACO* II.2.1, 33.

This again is a skilful demolition of Eutyches. Leo plainly thought that the Palestinian monks were contaminated by these ideas—on first hearing of the revolt, he described it as Eutyches waging war;[246] as recently as June 453 he had warned Maximus of Antioch to be vigilant against the heresies of both Nestorius and Eutyches,[247] and had expressed astonishment in his letter to Eudocia that monks living in the land where the historical events of the Gospels took place should doubt the reality of Christ's humanity.[248] It is therefore an admonition to them, just as his attack on Nestorius was a defence of himself. By defining Eutyches' dilemma so sharply, he indicated that the question of who was the subject of Christ's acts would have to be resolved in a way that would avoid any infringement of divine impassibility or docetism or, the Nestorian alternative, the positing of two persons in Christ. The answer is already hinted at by referring to Christ as the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, whom Eutyches regards as a phantom apparition.

Christ the Mediator *(ACO II.4, 160, lines 13–31)*

Leo knows that his readers agree with the condemnation of these errors and that such heretics are not Christians, but he points it out all the same. He then continues to insist that Christ had to be God and man. First, he quotes Jn 1.14, the Word became flesh, and 2 Cor 5.19, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Then he uses the title Mediator to ask how Christ could achieve reconciliation, how he could propitiate the Father, unless he took up the cause of all; then, changing the soteriological model, he asks how the mediation could be accomplished and the old man renewed unless Christ were both in the form of God and the form of a slave; and changing the model a third time, he asks how humanity could be delivered from the bond of death unless an innocent man died.

These different models are economically presented and brought together under the title of Mediator, which conveniently expresses both the duality and oneness of Christ. It is a title, or more broadly an idea, that Leo had often used but never so concisely or forcefully. The

---

[246] *Ep* 109, ST 43, TD 20, 113.   [247] *Ep* 119, ST 42, TD 20, 109–10.
[248] *Ep* 123, ST 50, TD 20, 130–1.

skill of the passage lies in the way that Leo moves from outrageous heresies, which the monks must condemn, to soteriological common-places, which they must welcome, while leading them inexorably to an account of the two natures in one person of Christ.

At this point,[249] Leo embarks on a long quotation from his 443 Palm Sunday sermon.[250] Its first sentence reads as a comment on the third soteriological model, the unmerited death of Christ: the pouring out of the blood of the just for the unjust was so powerful for the bill of law (*priuilegium*), so rich for the ransom, that no one would be held captive by the tyrant if they only believed in their Redeemer; the gift of liberty is more powerful than the debt of slavery. The implication is obvious. Christ had to be a man in order to shed his blood.

Christ Had To Be Human (ACO II.4, 160–1, lines 31–41, 1–6)

The quotation continues, drawing out the point that Christ had to be human to accomplish salvation. Unusually, the language is heavily sacrificial. Despite his use of sacrificial imagery, the sermon repeated here was the first time that Leo had made the sacrifice of Christ into a major soteriological theme. One clue as to why Leo had decided to make so much of the sacrificial aspect of Christ's death is given by his citing Eph 5.2, that he gave himself as an offering. Christ is therefore priest and victim, an idea that Augustine had used to explain the mediation of Christ, a theme to which Leo will return later in the letter.

Leo does draw two points from this emphasis on the sacrifice of Christ's humanity. First, that he was innocent and his death was different from that of the saints which, however precious, were not the propitiation of the world. Secondly, that he bore the universal human nature and therefore in him all were crucified, all were buried and all raised again. Christ is unique in his sinlessness and at the same time, as the new man, he is universal humanity. This has all along been a central feature of Leo's soteriology but here it has reached a new clarity of expression.

---

[249] *ACO* II.4, 160, line 26.   [250] *Tr* 64.3–4.

*One Person Yet Distinct Acts (*ACO II, 4, 161, lines 6–23)

Leo continues with the quotation from the Palm Sunday sermon but now turns to the most contentious point of all in the Tome: the distribution of the actions of Christ between the two natures. Here he offers a much more carefully nuanced explanation of the distinction of the acts and the role of the two natures in accomplishing them. He opens by insisting that Christ is one person of the Word and of the flesh, Son of God and of man, and both essences have common actions.[251] The *communicatio idiomatum* is therefore explained by the one acting subject of the person of Christ, the union of the two natures, responsible for all Christ's acts. The acts are then distinguished not by way of contrasting the natures but rather by affirming their complementarity. He distinguishes the power of the Word and the reality of the flesh, both of which are necessary. Without the power of the Word, the Virgin would not have conceived; without the reality of the flesh, his infancy would not have lain in swaddling clothes. Without the power of the Word, the Magi would not have adored the child; without the reality of the flesh, the child would not have been taken to Egypt to avoid Herod's persecution. Without the power of the Word, the Father would not have proclaimed him his beloved Son; without the reality of the flesh, John would not have hailed him as the Lamb of God. Without the power of the Word, there would not have been miracles of healing or the raising of the dead; without the reality of the flesh, he would not have been hungry or tired. Without the power of the Word, he would not have said he was equal to the Father; without the reality of the flesh, he would not have said the Father was greater than he. He concludes by observing that the one Son of God is both man and Word.

Leo needs to show that the role of each of the natures in the different acts is essential but not to suggest that there are two principles of action. He accomplishes this by the adroit expedient of simply using the word 'without.' Instead of defining what the natures do, he has shown what Christ could not do without them both.[252] He has

---

[251] *Quamuis ergo in uno domino nostro Iesu Christo uero dei atque hominis filio uerbi et carnis una persona sit et utraque essentia communes habeat actiones.*

[252] *quid sit quod caro sine uerbo non agit, et quid sit quod uerbum sine carne non efficit.*

furthermore maintained a contrast throughout of *sine uerbi potentia* and *sine ueritate carnis*, suggesting that the flesh was necessary but it was the Word's power working through it. Nevertheless, Leo was not satisfied. He wanted to show who the subject of all these acts was, whose was the voice who could both say he was the Father's equal and also the Father's inferior. To clarify that, he quoted his next sermon, the Wednesday of Holy Week.

One Acting Person, Two Unconfused Natures (ACO II.4, 161–2, lines 23–43, 1–4)

In Lent and Holy Week 453, Leo had offered three accounts of the distribution of the acts of Christ between the natures. Two of them are quoted in this letter. Having reproduced a large section of his Palm Sunday sermon, Leo now adds to it a couple of sentences from his Wednesday sermon which make the vital points that the natures were undivided from the conception in the womb, that all the acts were of one person and yet that the natures remain unconfused.[253] The targets against whom these points are made are obvious: Nestorius needs to hear that the natures were undivided from the moment of conception and that therefore the persons should not be doubled; Eutyches needs to learn that the natures are not confused and that the properties of the one are not absorbed by the other. The key idea that steers the course between Scylla and Charybdis is *persona*: here the natures are united and unconfused, yet actions both human and divine can be performed by one agent.

Leo now turns his fire on Eutyches and, by implication, on the Palestinian monks. They are called *isti phantasmatici Christiani* and they are asked which nature was nailed to the cross, lay in the tomb, rose in the flesh, and was seen and touched by the disciples after the Resurrection. This is a highly charged rhetorical passage. It is not

---

[253] *quamuis ergo ab illo initio quo in utero uirginis uerbum caro factum est, nihil umquam inter diuinam humanamque substantiam diuisionis extiterit et per omnia incrementa corporea unius personae fuerint totius temporis actiones, ea ipsa tamen quae inseparabiliter facta sunt, nulla permixtione confundimus, sed quid cuius formae sit, ex operum qualitate sentimus. nec diuina enim humanis praeiudicant nec humana diuinis, cum ita in id ipsum utraque concurrant, ut in eis nec proprietas absumatur nec persona geminetur.*

simply aimed at silencing neo-Apollinarian or Manichaean accounts of suffering divinity or illusory humanity. He is picking up his earlier insistence on the full significance of Christ's humanity for any adequate soteriology. At once, however, he eludes the counterattack, the accusation of Nestorianism, by reverting to the title of Christ as Mediator, quoting 1 Tim 2.5, the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, and adding to it Acts 4.12, that there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved, and then 1 Tim 2.6, that he gave himself as a ransom for all. Leo very seldom, perhaps only on this one occasion, quotes 1 Tim 2.6; the reason for doing so here is to reinforce the sacrificial role he has already ascribed to Christ as Mediator and therefore too his humanity.

The third gloss on the title Mediator is provided by Paul's kenotic hymn from Philippians, which Leo quotes in full. He had linked these texts as early as his first Christmas sermon,[254] but again it was most unusual for Leo to quote the whole of the hymn. It used the language of the two forms and spoke of the humility of God and the elevation of the humanity. It is perhaps therefore interesting that he changed the word *naturae* to *formae* in the quotation from the Wednesday sermon at the start of this section.

Commentary on Phil 2.6–11 (ACO II.4, 162, lines 4–33)

With another *quamuis ergo*, Leo reiterates the unity of divine and human in one person in Christ,[255] but goes on to ask which nature was exalted. In the form of God the Son was equal to the Father but in the form of a slave his humanity could be lifted up into the glory of divine power. Here, presumably consciously, Leo is moving into territory close to the hearts of any monks nourished on the works of the Alexandrian fathers. The Tome had been conspicuously silent about the glorification of Christ. He had talked about the risen Christ displaying his humanity and therefore the two natures persevering in him, but he had not spoken about the glorification of the ascended Christ, though he had had every opportunity to do so given his

---

[254] *Tr* 21.2.
[255] *quamuis ergo unus sit dominus Iesus Christus et uerae deitatis ueraeque humanitatis in ipso una prorsus eademque persona sit neque huius unitionis soliditas ulla possit diuisione seiungi.*

Ascension sermons of 444 and 445. What Leo wants to insist upon is the reality of the self-emptying of God, the reality of the form of the slave, as the prerequisite for glorification.

First, however, he makes a short digression to discuss *communicatio idiomatum*. He had observed in his Wednesday of Holy Week sermon 453 that though the Word is impassible, it is legitimate to ascribe to him the sufferings of humanity on account of the unity of the person.[256] The problem here is that in the Philippians hymn, the subject of the self-emptying is also the subject of the exaltation. Leo's defence is first to say that it is acceptable to say that the Lord of majesty was crucified, an allusion to 1 Cor 2.8, and therefore it is acceptable to say that the one eternally equal to the Father is exalted. Secondly, he explains the validity of this language by reference to the unity of person in which he is both Son of God and Son of Man.

Then he goes back to the hymn. He insists that it is the manhood that is exalted but then makes the interesting observation that the manhood does not receive only from the Father but also from himself in the form of the Father. He is rich and poor. Leo quotes Jn 1.1–3 to illustrate that he was rich and Jn 1.14 to illustrate his poverty. This might have appealed to readers of Cyril, with his constant motif of the glorification of the flesh by the Logos, but it owes its conception to Augustine's idea of the Mediator effecting the transaction within himself of mutual giving between divine and human. This opens the way to his going back to the self-emptying, which he explains as the undertaking of humanity to blot out the bond of death by shedding innocent blood.

In this section, Leo has successfully linked divine humility and human exaltation with the sinless death of Christ as the pivot. The transaction is conducted within the person of the Mediator, who being one person makes the whole action one. By bringing together the idea of Christ as Mediator and the Philippians kenotic hymn, Leo has escaped any allegations of dividing Christ into two subjects or focusing on the humanity to the exclusion of the divinity. It is a brilliant application of his doctrine of two natures in the one person.

[256]   *Tr* 65.3.

*The Monks Reproved (*ACO II.4, 162–3, lines 34–44, 1–18)

The first readers of this letter must have been shocked when they reached these concluding sections. The opening had been quite conciliatory; now at the end Leo suddenly becomes savage. They are rebuked for their disruptive and violent behaviour; chastised for their lack of monastic virtue; taunted with having betrayed the faith without even the threat of the torturer's instruments. He accuses them directly of denying the true flesh of Christ, subjecting the essence of the Word to suffering and death, of making our nature different from his who repaired it, and of saying that what the cross lifted up, what the lance wounded, what the stone of the tomb received and gave back was a work of divine power alone and not also of human humility. The doctrinal and soteriological underpinning of the attack is, of course, already firmly in place. Leo has depicted himself as the champion of divine simplicity, of a salvation rooted in the solidarity of all humanity with Christ, of the full role of the humanity in Christ's saving work. As the opponents of all this, the monks are told they will show themselves to have received no virtue from the sign of the cross which they have accepted to wear on their foreheads but blush to profess with their lips.

*Exhortation (*ACO II.4, 163, lines 18–26)

The letter ends with a stern admonition to abandon their heretical ideas, buttressed with a striking summary of the orthodox doctrine. The Virgin conceived the Word in such a way that she provided flesh of her substance to be united to him without the addition of a second person and without the destruction of her nature, because he who was in the form of God so accepted the form of a slave that Christ is one and the same in both forms, God bending himself down to the lowness of man and man rising up to the summit of the Godhead.

Conclusion

In the six years between his letter to Turibius and his letter to the Palestinian monks, Leo's theological understanding had grown apace with his skill in theological argument. The Tome was a milestone on

the way. Though he defended it and continued to promote it, the truth was that it was unrepresentative of the main lines of his thought, it misunderstood one of the opponents against whom it was directed and it was replaced by the far more satisfactory *Epistle* 124, re-written in 458 as *Epistle* 165. Leo had hoped to produce a settlement to the Christological disputes that had divided the East for twenty years. He adhered to the Formula of Reunion but realised that it had become a focus of controversy rather than of unity. The Tome was intended to replace it as a document around which everyone could rally. Unfortunately, by misreading the map of the Christological disputes, Leo produced only another focus of controversy and, by the time he formed a better understanding of the issues and wrote the letter to the Palestinian monks, it was too late.

Both *Epistle* 28 and *Epistle* 124 are densely soteriological statements but the latter is far more typical of Leo's thought than the former. At the heart of Leo's understanding of salvation was the mystery of the oneness and duality of Christ, the Mediator, drawing humanity into reconciliation with God in his own self. Ideas that he already entertained at the outset of his preaching in 440 reach their maturest expression in the sermons he delivered in 452–3 and the letter to the Palestinian monks. But despite the continuities in Leo's thought, it is plain that he had learned a great deal in thirteen years.

Conclusions

This book is an attempt to explore the formation and achievement as a theologian of Leo the Great. By looking at his background, it tries to illuminate his motives as a preacher and writer and the resources available to him. By looking at the society and Church he addressed, it attempts to shed light on the effect he hoped to achieve which in turn allows us to assess what he did in fact achieve. By reading his work, we can trace the development of his ideas, his growing skill and confidence as a theologian, and the characteristic preoccupations of his thought. This task has been made possible by the publication in 1973 of Antoine Chavasse's edition of Leo's sermons, in which he succeeded for the first time in dating the vast majority. This is the first book to exploit that achievement and read Leo's work in the order in which it was composed.

What is immediately striking about Leo is how unusual he was. He was the first pope to attempt any kind of major theological work. In becoming Bishop of Rome in 440, he brought the rise of papal influence in the city of Rome to its apogee. Everything he said and did was animated by his conviction that he was the heir of the apostle Peter, his representative, and as such responsible for the whole city of which Peter was the true second founder. His decision to preach and then to publish his sermons, a distinguished literary achievement, showed how far the papacy had come since the disputed accession of Damasus in 366, which was the occasion of shocking violence. Leo's own early days in the service of the Church had taught him the dangers of sliding back towards division with the bitter experience of another disputed election on the death of Zosimus in 418. Just over twenty years later, contemporaries marvelled at the tranquillity

of the city as they awaited Leo's return from a diplomatic mission in Gaul before he was elected to the chair of Peter. By 443, he could preside over a court case attended by the whole Senate. He was now the embodiment of classical virtue and culture, the greatest orator in the city, and indisputably the greatest Roman of his day.

He was one of the first preachers to speak to a city where the whole population was now effectively Christian; he offered a Christianity for everyman, a faith that did not subvert the traditional bonds of society and scarcely challenged its mores or values, but rather baptised old-fashioned civic virtue and offered a new way of understanding what it was to be a good Roman. Since the time of Damasus, the popes had positioned themselves carefully in relation to the ascetic movement that looked beyond Rome to monasticism in Palestine for its inspiration. Rome had no monasteries. The popes shaped clerical life in the city not according to monastic ideals but rather, influenced by Ambrose of Milan, as the marriage of virtue and utility. Roman clerics, and above all the popes themselves, were supposed to be men of austere but not world-denying respectability, useful public servants rather than charismatic holy men and contemplatives.

This shaped the content of Leo's preaching. His message was a civic Christianity in which the Gospel was a religion for all, which did not aim at individual holiness but at building up society as a community of love united in Christ. Leo owed so much of his thinking here to Augustine. From the Bishop of Hippo, whom he had met when he was young, Leo drew the idea of Christ the Mediator, restoring justice among men and creating a community of love which interacted with and served society as a whole. But, unlike Augustine, Leo taught constantly that God's will was for all to be saved, that Christ offered a gospel for the whole city and not only for the elect. Leo's first brush with theological dispute, and thus presumably his first lessons in theology, was the dispute between Pope Zosimus and Augustine in 417–18. Leo learned far more from the Nestorian dispute of 428–33, when he was Archdeacon of Rome and in which he played his part by recruiting John Cassian to write a treatise condemning Nestorius. Though Pope Celestine's judgment against Nestorius in 430 was legally decisive, neither the pope nor

his archdeacon could present a theological rationale comparable with the onslaught against the Bishop of Constantinople mounted by Cyril of Alexandria. Rome was persuaded by Cyril that Nestorius was an adoptionist whose sharp distinction between the divine and human in Christ amounted to a denial of his divinity. In Cyril, Leo saw the champion of orthodoxy, a towering theological genius, with whom Rome should always remain in alliance. But the works of Cyril which Leo read were limited in number and translated in such a way that some of the most characteristic features of Cyril's Christology were obscured. The Formula of Reunion of 433 was read in Rome as a typically Cyrillian statement and it is likely that Leo remained unaware of the suspicion with which it was greeted by many of Cyril's supporters.

By the time Leo was elected pope in 440, he had educated himself with solid reading in Augustine and Hilary of Poitiers; he was not profoundly learned in the scriptures and relied upon a stock of familiar passages which he usually used as proof-texts rather than the structural basis of a homily; he commanded a fine Latin style. He set out to preach regularly throughout the liturgical calendar, between a dozen and fifteen times a year, presumably to large gatherings who had crossed the city to one or other of the huge basilicas. By preaching on the liturgical feasts rather than on biblical texts, he presented what was effectively a catechism of Christian doctrine distributed around the saving events of Christ's life and the ecclesial experience of salvation. Read in the order in which they were preached, his sermons offer a series of connected expositions of the *mysteria* of Christ, the overarching plan of salvation, and the *sacramenta* which were his saving acts, all of them ordered to the Pasch but all of them nevertheless salvific. Christ's whole life had saving force. Christ laid down a model, an *exemplum*, into which the faithful community could be assimilated by participation in the liturgy and by acting out its demands in daily life, notably in the twin activities of fasting and almsgiving.

For five years, Leo preached series of sermons which he gathered and edited, and later published. His first cycle of sermons in 440–1 was a tour de force but it exposed serious weaknesses in his theology which he sought to rectify in 441–3. In those years he struggled above all to give an account of the role of Christ's divinity in salvation. He

proposed two main accounts. In one, Christ's life and death were the triumph of innocent suffering over the unjust demands of the Devil, thereby restoring justice. Christ's sinlessness depended upon his divinity. In the other, Christ was the Mediator, in whom the divine was mediated through his humanity, uniting the faithful as the body of Christ. In these years, Leo offered fuller and more profound statements of the meaning of the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. His chief preoccupation was to delineate the interchange between Christ's two natures, their correspondence and coordination in action. The sermons of 443–4 were dominated by the challenge posed by the discovery of a Manichaean sect in the city in 443. It was now the humanity of Christ and its potential for glorification that drew Leo's attention. The last cycle of this first edited group of sermons drew many of these ideas together, notably in his distinguished sermons for the Transfiguration and the Ascension. At the heart of these sermons was an Augustinian account of Christ the Mediator, uniting two natures in his person, reconciling God and humanity in a new relationship of love.

In 445, Leo could afford to celebrate. Not only had these great sermon cycles established for the first time a pope as a great master of theology, but in that year imperial decrees both ratified his judgments against the Manichees in 443 and his ascendancy over the Church in Gaul and his victory in a dispute with Hilary of Arles. Two years later, he extended his theological range further by producing short treatises in the form of letters. Popes had been writing legal judgments and issuing disciplinary instructions since Siricius issued his first decretal in 385 but none of Leo's predecessors had attempted to offer a justification for their decisions. Leo did that in two letters published in 447. Though not exactly the work of a novice, they do not display the magisterial accomplishment that Leo was shortly to show in his involvement with the dispute ignited by the trial of Eutyches. Without them, however, Leo's involvement in the crisis that led to Chalcedon and beyond might have repeated the mutedness with which Rome engaged with Nestorius and Cyril in 428–33.

When Leo decided to write his Tome in 449, he was ambitious to provide a settlement to the disputes that had begun in 428. It was not simply a judgment against Eutyches, it was an attempt

to provide a resolution of the opposite heresy, that of Nestorius, too. Eutyches, to Leo, was effectively denying Christ's humanity. Nestorius, Rome had learned in 428–30, had effectively denied Christ's divinity. For Leo, therefore, there were two opposite heresies in contention and against them what needed to be stressed above all was the duality of natures in Christ. While much of the Tome was made up of quotations from his own sermons, the places where he most stressed the distinctiveness of Christ's two natures in action relied upon other sources for they were the least characteristic, yet the most controversial, sections of the work. The Tome for all its ambition was a flawed work, foreign to the characteristic emphases of his theology. He had misread the theological map of the previous twenty years.

News of the reaction to the Tome at Chalcedon forced Leo to revise his understanding of Nestorius. Instead of condemning him as an adoptionist as he had done when he composed the Tome, from 452 onwards he condemned him for having divided the natures and split Christ in two. This reappraisal of Nestorius and the news of the revolt of the monks in Palestine led him to return to a more characteristic statement of his theological outlook in his letter to the Palestinian monks in 453. This was a considerably more satisfactory achievement than the Tome to Flavian. The coordination of the two natures in the one person of Christ becomes its central message and it stands as Leo's most poised and complete theological work. He had come a long way since those first attempts at theological treatises in 447. It is striking that it was the letter to the Palestinian monks, not the Tome to Flavian, which he presented to the Emperor Leo as his definitive Christological statement in 458.

The Christ whom Leo preached as the source of his message of civic Christianity, the Mediator bringing humanity and divinity together in his person, creating a community of love for all people, was the Christ whose identity reached fullest expression in his letter to the Palestinian monks of 453. The account of salvation he wanted to present to the people of Rome depended on the Christology he defended so vigorously in the aftermath of Chalcedon. Leo's theological formation can be traced back to its roots in the Pelagian controversy in 418, the Nestorian controversy a decade later, the

gradual development of his ideas in the five cycles of sermons he preached between 440–5, his first attempts at writing theological treatises in 447, and the controversy surrounding Eutyches and his Tome to Flavian, reaching its most mature expression in the letter to the Palestinian monks in 453. Leo saw himself as Peter's successor, first teaching his city and then more boldly teaching the world.

Bibliography

Leo the Great: editions

Canon Jalland, *Leo the Great*, 495–511, provides the most convenient account of the MS tradition of the sermons and letters. The sermons are edited and dated by Canon Chavasse in *CC* 138–138A. The Ballerini edition, printed in Migne, PL, 54, is still the best for some, especially early, letters but is largely superseded by E. Schwartz (ed.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, II.4, and, with superior apparatus, C. Silva-Tarouca (ed.), *Textus et Documenta* 23 for letters to Illyricum; 9 for the Tome and *Ep* 165; 15 and 20 for other letters in the Chalcedonian crisis.

References to sermons give the number and paragraph according to Chavasse (e.g. *Tr* 21.1). References to letters always give the Ballerini number, followed by the best edition; when that edition is Schwartz, I give the page number of *ACO* II.4 (e.g. *Ep* 124, *ACO* II.4, 159–63); when the edition is Silva-Tarouca, I give his number of the letter, except in the case of the Tome and *Ep* 165 which are unnumbered, followed by the volume and page of the Textus et Documenta series (e.g. *Ep* 131, ST 56, TD 20, 143–4).

All translations from Leo and other fathers are my own.

Secondary Literature

Amann, É., 'L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23 (1949), 5–37, 207–44; 24 (1950), 28–52, 235–65.

Arens, H., *Die christologische Sprache Leos des Großen: Analyse des Tomus an den Patriarchen Flavian* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1982).

Armitage, M., 'A Marian Theme in the Soteriology of St Leo the Great,' *Marianum*, 55 (1993), 251–8.

Armitage, J.M., 'The Economy of Mercy: the Liturgical Preaching of Saint Leo the Great,' unpublished PhD Thesis (University of Durham, 1997).

——— *A Twofold Solidarity: Leo the Great's Theology of Redemption* (Strathfield, Australia, 2005).

Bacht, H., 'Die Rolle des orientalischen Mönchtums in der kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzung um Chalkedon (431–519),' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 2 (Würzburg, 1951), 192–314.

Baldovin, J.F., *The Urban Character of Christian Worship: The Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy* (Rome, 1987).

Barclift, P.L., 'Predestination and Divine Foreknowledge in the Sermons of Pope Leo the Great,' *Church History*, 62 (1993), 5–21.

—— 'The Shifting Tones of Pope Leo the Great's Christological Vocabulary,' *Church History*, 66 (1997), 221–39.

Bartnik, C., 'L'interpretation théologique de la crise de l'Empire Romain par Léon le Grand,' *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 63 (1968), 745–84.

—— 'L'universalisme de l'histoire dans le De vocatione omnium gentium,' *Revue d'Histoire Écclésiastique*, 68 (1973), 731–58.

De Beer, F., 'Une Tessère d'orthodoxie. Le "Libellus emendationis" de Leporius (vers 418–21),' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 10 (1964), 145–85.

Bonner, G., 'Augustine's Concept of Deification,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 37 (1986), 369–86.

—— 'Deification, Divinization,' in A. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 265–6.

Brakke, D., *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford, 1995).

Bright, W., *Select Sermons of S. Leo the Great on the Incarnation*, 2nd edn. (London, 1886).

Brisson, J.-P. (ed.), *Hilaire de Poitiers: Traité des Mystères*, Sources Chrétiennes, 19b (Paris, 1967).

Brown, P., 'Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman Aristocracy,' *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine* (London, 1972), 161–82.

—— *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981).

Campos, J., 'La Epistola antipriscillianista de S León Magno,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 269–308.

Caner, D., *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 2002).

Cappuyns, M., 'L'auteur du "De Vocatione Omnium Gentium",' *Revue Bénédictine*, 39 (1927), 198–226.

—— 'Le premier représentant de l'Augustinisme medieval, Prosper d'Aquitaine,' *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 1 (1929), 309–37.

Caspar, E., *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, vol 1 (Tübingen, 1930).

Cavalcanti, E., 'The Sermon of Leo the First on the Transfiguration (*Serm* LI Chavasse),' *Studia Patristica*, 38 (2001), 371–6.

Chadwick, H., *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976).

—— *Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy* (Oxford, 1981).

Charles-Edwards, T.M., 'Palladius, Prosper and Leo the Great: Mission and Primatial Authority,' in D. Dumville (ed.), *Saint Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge, 1993), 1–12.

Chastagnol, A., 'Le senateur Volusien et la conversion d'une famille de l'aristocratie romaine au bas-empire,' *Revue des Études Anciennes*, 58 (1956), 241–53.

Chavasse, A., 'Dans sa predication, saint Léon le Grand a-t-il utilisé des sources liturgiques?' *Mélanges liturgiques offerts au R.P. Dom Bernard Botte OSB* (Louvain, 1972), 71–4.

Chupungco, A., *The Cosmic Elements of Christian Passover* (Rome, 1977).

Conybeare, C., *Paulinus Noster: Self and Symbols in the Letters of Paulinus of Nola* (Oxford, 2000).

Constas, N., *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1–5, Texts and Translations* (Leiden-Boston, 2003).

Couturier, C., '*Sacramentum* et *Mysterium* dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin,' in H. Rondet (ed.), *Études Augustiniennes* (Paris, 1953), 162–332.

Curran, J., *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford, 2000).

Dagron, G., 'Les moines et la ville: le monachisme à Constantinople,' *Travaux et Mémoires*, 4 (1970), 229–76.

Daley, B.E., 'A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in St Augustine's Christology,' *Word and Spirit*, 9 (1987), 100–17.

—— 'The Giant's Twin Substances: Ambrose and the Christology of Augustine's *Contra sermonem Arianorum*,' *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum* (New York, 1993), 477–95.

—— 'Christology,' in A. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 164–9.

Dekkers, E., 'Autour de l'oeuvre liturgique de saint Léon le Grand,' *Sacris Erudiri*, 10 (1958), 363–98.

Deneffe, A., 'Tradition und Dogma bei Leo dem Grossen,' *Scholastik*, 9 (1934), 543–54.

De Plinval, G., 'Prosper d'Aquitaine interprète de saint Augustin,' *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 1 (1958), 339–55.

De Soos, M.-B., *Le mystère liturgique d'après saint Léon le Grand* (Münster, 1958).

—— 'Présence du mystère du salut dans la liturgie d'après saint Léon,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 73 (1959), 116–35.

Dewart, J.M., 'The Influence of Theodore of Mopsuestia on Augustine's Letter 187,' *Augustinian Studies*, 10 (1979), 113–32.

Di Capua, F., *Il Ritmo Prosaico nelle Lettere dei Papi e nei Documenti della Cancellaria Romana dal IV al XIV Secolo*, vol 1 (Rome, 1937).

—— 'San Leone Letterato e Artista,' *Scritti Minori*, vol 2 (Rome, 1959), 162–70.

—— 'Leone Magno e Prospero di Aquitania,' *Scritti Minori*, vol 2 (Rome, 1959), 184–90.

Dodaro, R., *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2004).

Dolle, R., 'Un docteur de l'aumône, saint Léon le Grand,' *La Vie Spirituelle*, 96 (1957), 266–87.

—— 'Les idées morales de saint Léon le Grand,' *Mélanges de Science Religieuse,* 15 (1958), 49–84.

—— 'Les sermons en double édition de S. Leon le Grand,' *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Medievale*, 45 (1978), 5–33.

Dominguez-Del Val, U., 'S León Magno y el Tomus ad Flavianum,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 193–233.

Driscoll, J., 'The Transfiguration in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew,' *Augustinianum*, 24 (1984), 395–420.

Drobner, H., *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus: zur Herkunft der Formel 'Una Persona'* (Leiden, 1986).

Du Manoir, H., 'Saint Léon et la définition dogmatique de Chalcédoine,' *L'Année Théologique*, 40 (1951), 291–304.

Dumville, D. (ed.), *Saint Patrick AD 493–1993* (Woodbridge, 1993).

Dunn, G.D., 'Divine Impassibility and Christology in the Christmas Homilies of Leo the Great,' *Theological Studies*, 62 (2001), 71–85.

—— 'Suffering Humanity and Divine Impassibility: The Christology of the Lenten Homilies of Leo the Great,' *Augustinianum*, 41 (2001), 257–71.

Dunn, M., *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000).

Duval, Y.-M., 'Quelques emprunts de saint Léon à saint Augustin,' *Mélanges de Science Religieuse*, 15 (1958), 85–94.

—— 'Saint Léon le Grand et saint Gaudence de Brescia,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 11 (1960), 82–4.

—— 'L'originalité du "De Virginibus" dans le mouvement ascetique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase,' *Ambroise de Milan: Dix Études* (Paris, 1974), 9–66.

Ebied, R.Y., and Wickham, L.R., 'Timothy Aelurus: Against the Definition of the Council of Chalcedon,' in C. Laga, J.A. Munitiz, and L. van Rompay (eds.), *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* (Leuven, 1985).

Eizenhöfer, L., 'Das Opfer der Gläubigen in den Sermonen Leos des Grossen,' in F. X. Arnold and B. Fischer (eds.), *Die Messe in der Glaubensverkündigung: Kerygmatische Fragen* (Freiburg, 1950), 79–107.

Elm, E., *Die Macht der Weisheit: Das Bild des Bischofs in der 'Vita Augustini' des Possidius und anderen spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Bischofsviten* (Leiden, 2003).

Elm, S., '*Virgins of God*': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity (Oxford, 1994).

—— 'Inventing the "Father of the Church": Gregory of Nazianzus' "Farewell to the Bishops" (Or 42) in its Historical Context,' in F.J. Felten and N. Jaspert (eds.), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift fur Kaspar Elm zum 70 Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1999), 3–20.

Emmi, B., 'Leone ed Eutiche,' *Angelicum*, 29 (1952), 3–42.

Fairburn, D., *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford, 2003).

Felten, F.J. and Jaspert, N. (eds.), *Vita Religiosa im Mittelalter: Festschrift fur Kaspar Elm zum 70 Geburtstag* (Berlin, 1999).

Ferrari, G., *Early Roman Monasteries: Notes for the History of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century* (Vatican City, 1957).

Ferrua, A., *Epigrammata Damasiana* (Rome, 1942).

Fischer, B. and Wagner, J. (eds.), *Paschatis Sollemnia: Studien zu Osterfeier und Osterfrömmigkeit* (Freiburg, 1959).

Fredouille, J.C. and Louis H. (eds.), *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes*, vol 1 (Paris, 1992).

Gaidioz, J., 'Saint Prosper d'Aquitaine et le Tome à Flavien,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 23 (1949), 270–301.

Gaillard, J., 'Noel: memoria ou mystère?' *Maison-Dieu*, 59 (1959), 37–59.

Galtier, P., 'Saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie et saint Léon le Grand à Chalcédoine,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1 (Würzburg, 1951), 345–87.

Garrido Bonaño, M., 'Prolongacion de Cristo en su Cuerpo Mistico, segun San León Magno,' *Studium*, 15 (1975), 491–505.

Gavrilyuk, P., *The Suffering of the Impassible God: The Dialectics of Patristic Thought* (Oxford, 2004).

Goubert, P., 'Le rôle de sainte Pulchérie et de l'eunuque Chrysaphios,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1 (Würzburg, 1951), 303–21.

Gould, G., 'Cyril of Alexandria and the Formula of Reunion,' *Downside Review*, 106 (1988), 235–52.

Graef, H., *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, vol 1 (London, 1963).

Granata, A., 'Note sulle Fonti di S. Leone Magno,' *Rivista di Storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 14 (1960), 263–82.

Grillmeier, A., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 1, 2nd edn. (London, 1975).

—— *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol 2, part 1 (London, 1987).

Guillaume, A., *Jeûne et charité dans l'Église latine, des origins au XIIe siècle en particulier chez saint Léon le Grand* (Paris, 1954).

Guzie, T.W., 'Exegetical and Sacramental Language in the Sermons of St Leo the Great,' *Studia Patristica*, 12 (1975), 208–13.

Halliwell, W.J., *The Style of Pope St Leo the Great* (Washington, DC, 1939).

Harries, J., *Sidonius Apollinaris and the Fall of Rome* (Oxford, 1994).

Harris, W.V. (ed.), *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI, 1999).

Harrison, C., 'The Rhetoric of Scripture and Preaching: Classical Decadence or Christian Aesthetic?,' in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and his Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2000), 214–30.

Hartney, A.M., *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London, 2004).

Hervé de L'incarnation, 'La grâce dans l'oeuvre de S. Léon le Grand,' *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 22 (1955), 17–55, 193–212.

Hofmann, F., 'Die Osterbotschaft in den Predigten Papst Leos der Grossen,' in B. Fischer and J. Wagner (eds.), *Paschatis Sollemnia: Studien zu Osterfeier und Osterfrömmigkeit* (Freiburg, 1959), 76–86.

Holeton, D.R., 'The Sacramental Language of S. Leo the Great: A Study of the Words *Munus* and *Oblata*,' *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 92 (1978), 115–65.

Horn, C.B., *Asceticism and Christological Controversy in Fifth-century Palestine: The Career of Peter the Iberian* (Oxford, 2006).

Horn, S.O., *Petrou Kathedra: der Bischof von Rom und die Synoden von Ephesus (449) und Chalcedon* (Paderborn, 1982).

Hudon, G., *La perfection chrétienne d'après les sermons de saint Léon* (Paris, 1959), 55–74.

—— 'Les présupposés "sacramentels" de saint Léon le Grand,' *Église et Théologie*, 10 (1979), 323–41.

—— 'L'Église dans la pensée de saint Léon,' *Église et Théologie*, 14 (1983), 305–36.

—— 'Le Concept d'*assumptio* dans l'ecclésiologie de Léon le Grand,' *Studia Patristica*, 18/1 (1985), 155–62.

Humphries, M., *Communities of the Blessed: Social Environment and Religious Change in Northern Italy, AD 200–400* (Oxford, 1999).

Hunter, D.G., 'Resistance to the Virginal Ideal in Late-Fourth-Century Rome: the Case of Jovinian,' *Theological Studies*, 48 (1987), 45–64.

Hunter, D.G., *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (Oxford, 2007).

Jackson, M., 'Miracles and "Spiritual Correctness" in the Theology of St Augustine,' *Studia Patristica*, 38 (2001), 184–9.

Jalland, T., *The Life and Times of St Leo the Great* (London, 1941).

—— *The Church and the Papacy A Historical Study* (London, 1944).

James, N.W., 'Pope Leo the Great, the City of Rome and the Western Churches,' unpublished D. Phil Thesis (University of Oxford, 1984).

—— 'Was Leo the Great the Author of Liturgical Prayers?,' *Studia Patristica*, 26 (1991), 35–40.

—— 'Leo the Great and Prosper of Aquitaine: A Fifth-Century Pope and his Advisor,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, ns 44 (1993), 554–84.

Jenal, G., *Italia Ascetica atque Monastica: das Asketen- und Mönchtum in Italien von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit der Langobarden (ca 150/250–604)*, vol 1 (Stuttgart, 1995).

Jimenez Delgado, J., 'Hacia una nueva edición crítica del epistolario Leonino,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 235–68.

Jossua, J.-P., *Le Salut: incarnation ou mystère pascal chez les pères de l'Église de saint Irénée à saint Léon le Grand* (Paris, 1968).

Jugie, M., 'L'Intervention de S Léon le Grand dans les affaires des Églises Orientales,' *Miscellanea Pio Paschini*, I (Rome, 1948), 77–94.

Keating, D.A., *The Appropriation of Divine Life in Cyril of Alexandria* (Oxford, 2004).

Kelly, J.N.D., *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London, 1975).

—— *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford, 1986).

Kitzinger, E., *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum and British Library*, 3rd edn. (London, 1983).

Krautheimer, R., 'The Architecture of Sixtus III: A Fifth-Century Renascence?,' in M. Meiss (ed.), *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York, 1961), 291–302.

—— *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics* (Berkeley, CA, 1983).

—— *Rome: Portrait of a City, 312–1308* (Princeton, 2000).

Kreider, A. (ed.), *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh, 2001).

Laga, C., Munitiz, J.A., and van Rompay, L., *After Chalcedon: Studies in Theology and Church History Offered to Professor Albert van Roey for his Seventieth Birthday* (Leuven, 1985).

Lamirande, É., *Paulin de Milan et la 'Vita Ambrosii': Aspects de la religion sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris and Montreal, 1983).

Lampe, P., *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (London, 2003).

Lancel, S., *St Augustine* (London, 2002).

Lançon, B., *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change, AD 312–609* (Edinburgh, 2000).

Lapidge, M. and David, D. (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984).

Lauras, A., 'Saint Léon le Grand et la Tradition,' *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 48 (1960), 166–84.

—— 'Saint Léon le Grand et l'Écriture sainte,' *Studia Patristica*, 6 (1962), 127–40.

—— 'Saint Léon le Grand et le Manichéisme Romain,' *Studia Patristica*, 11 (1972), 203–9.

—— 'Saint Léon le Grand et les Juifs,' *Studia Patristica*, 17, pt 1 (1982), 55–61.

Lepelley, C., 'Saint Léon le Grand et la Cité Romaine,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 35 (1961), 130–50.

—— 'S Léon le Grand et l'église mauretanienne: primauté romaine et autonomie africaine du Vième siècle,' *Les Cahiers de Tunisie*, 15 (1967), 189–204.

Lienhard, J.T., *Paulinus of Nola and Early Western Monasticism: With a Study of the Chronology of his Works and an Annotated Bibliography, 1879–1976* (Köln-Bonn, 1977).

Lieu, S.N.C., *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen, 1992).

Lizzi, R., 'Ambrose's Contemporaries in the Christianization of Northern Italy,' *Journal of Roman Studies*, 80 (1990), 156–73.

Lizzi: *see also* Testa.

Lorenz, R., 'Der Augustinismus Prospers von Aquitanien,' *Zeitschrift fur Kirchengeschichte*, 73 (1962), 217–52.

Louth, A., 'The Literature of the Monastic Movement,' in F. Young, L. Ayres and A. Louth (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, 2004), 373–81.

McGuckin, J., 'Did Augustine's Christology depend on Theodore of Mopsuestia?,' *Heythrop Journal*, 31 (1990), 39–52.

—— *St Cyril of Alexandria: the Christological Controversy. Its History, Theology and Texts* (Leiden, 1994).

McLynn, N.B., *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA, 1994).

McShane, P., *La Romanitas et le pape Léon le Grand: l'apport culturel des institutions imperials à la formation des institutions ecclésiastiques* (Tournai, 1979).

—— 'Leo the Great: Guardian of Doctrine and Discipline,' *Église et Théologie*, 14 (1983), 9–24.

Maier, H.O., ' "Manichee!": Leo the Great and the Orthodox Panopticon,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4 (1996), 441–60.

Martinez Fazio, L.M., 'La restauración de san León Magno en la basilica Ostiense,' *Römische Quartalschrift*, 58 (1963), 1–27.

Markus, R., 'Chronicle and Theology: Prosper of Aquitaine,' in C. Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (eds.), *The Inheritance of Historiography 350–900* (Exeter, 1986), 31–43.

Mathisen, R.W., *Ecclesiastical Factionalism and Religious Controversy in Fifth-Century Gaul* (Washington, DC, 1989).

Meiss, M. (ed.), *De Artibus Opuscula XL Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York, 1961).

Merdinger, J.E., *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, 1997).

Meunier, B., *Le Christ de Cyrille d'Alexandrie: L'Humanité, le salut et la question monophysite* (Paris, 1997).

Mikat, P., 'Die Lehre vom Almosen in den Kollektenpredigten Papst Leos des Großen,' in H. Rahner and E. von Severus (eds.), *Perennitas: Beiträge zur christlichen Archäologie und Kunst, zur Geschichte der Literatur, der Liturgie und des Mönchtums sowie zur Philosophie des Rechts und zur politischen Philosophie P Thomas Michels OSB zum 70. Geburtstag* (Münster, 1963), 46–64.

Miles, M., 'Santa Maria Maggiore's Fifth-Century Mosaics: Triumphal Christianity and the Jews,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 86 (1993), 155–75.

Miller, F., *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II 408–450* (Berkeley, CA, 2006).

Mohrmann, C., 'Sacramentum dans les plus anciens textes Chrétiens,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 47 (1954), 141–52.

Monfrin, F., 'À propos de Milan Chrétien: siège épiscopale et topographie chrétienne IV–VI siècles,' *Cahiers Archéologiques*, 39 (1991), 7–46.

Moorhead, J., *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London, 1999).

Mozeris, D., *Doctrina Sancti Leonis Magni de Christo Restitutore et Sacerdote* (Mundelein, IL, 1940).

Mueller, M., *The Vocabulary of Pope St Leo the Great* (Washington, DC, 1943).

Nicolas, M.-J., 'La doctrine christologique de saint Léon le Grand,' *Revue Thomiste*, 51 (1951), 609–60.

Nisters, B., 'Die Collectio Palatina,' *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 113 (1932), 119–37.

Norcock, C.R., 'St Gaudentius of Brescia and the *Tome* of St Leo,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, 15 (1914), 593–6.

Norris, R.A., 'Christological Models in Cyril of Alexandria,' *Studia Patristica*, 13 (1975), 255–68.

O'Keefe, J.J., 'Impassible Suffering? Divine Passion and Fifth-Century Christology,' *Theological Studies*, 58 (1997), 39–60.

Oroz Reta, J., 'S. Leon Magno, Papa de la Romanidad,' *Helmantica*, 13 (1962), 163–91.

Paredi, A., 'Paulinus of Milan,' *Sacris Erudiri*, 14 (1963), 206–30.

Paschoud, F., *Roma Aeterna: Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions* (Rome, 1967).

Pellegrino, M., 'Temi Dominanti nei Sermoni Natalizi di S. Leone Magno,' *Miscellanea Carlo Figini* (Milan, 1964), 97–115.

Perrone, L., *La Chiesa di Palestina e le Controversie Christologiche* (Brescia, 1980).

Pietri, C., *Roma Christiana: recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte* (Rome, 1976).

Plagnieux, J., 'Le Grief de complicité entre erreurs nestorienne et pelagienne d'Augustin à Cassien par Prosper d'Aquitaine?,' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 2 (1956), 391–402.

Poque, S., 'Christus Mercator,' *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 48 (1960), 564–77.

Prestige, L., 'The Greek Translation of the *Tome* of St Leo,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, 31 (1930), 183–4.

Price, R. and Gaddis, M. (eds.), *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon* (Liverpool, 2005).

Rahner, H., 'Leo der Grosse, der Papst des Konzils,' in A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart*, vol 1 (Würzburg, 1951), 323–39.

Rapp, C., *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, CA, 2005).

Remy, G., *Le Christ médiateur dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin*, 2 vols (Lille, 1979).

Richard, M., 'L'introduction du mot "Hypostase" dans la théologie de l'Incarnation,' *Mélanges de science religieuse*, 2 (1945), 5–32, 243–70.

——— 'Le pape saint Léon le Grand et les *Scholia de Incarnatione Unigeniti* de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie,' *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 40 (1952), 116–28.

Rieux, G., 'Le Temps de salut chez saint Léon,' *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 94 (1993), 95–111.

Riga, P., 'Penance in St Leo the Great,' *Église et Théologie*, 5 (1974), 5–32.

Rivière, J., 'La Rédemption chez saint Léon le Grand,' *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 9 (1929), 17–42, 153–87.

Romanides, J.S., 'Leo of Rome's Support for Theodoret, Dioscorus of Alexandria's Support for Eutyches and the Lifting of the Anathemas,' *Theologia*, 65 (1994), 479–93.

Rousseau, P., *Ascetics, Authority and the Church in the Age of Jerome and Cassian* (Oxford, 1978).

Russell, N., *Cyril of Alexandria* (London and New York, 2000).

—— *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford, 2004).

Salzman, M.R., *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA, 1990).

—— 'The Christianization of Sacred Time and Sacred Space,' in W.V. Harris (ed.), *The Transformations of Urbs Roma in Late Antiquity* (Portsmouth, RI, 1999), 123–34.

—— *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

Schäublin, C., '*De Doctrina Christiana*: A Classic of Western Culture?,' in D.W.H. Arnold and P. Bright (eds.), *'De Doctrina Christiana': A Classic of Western Culture* (Notre Dame, 1995), 47–67.

Schwaiger, G. (ed.), *Konzil und Papst: Historische Beiträge zur Frage der höchsten Gewalt in der Kirche. Festgabe für Hermann Tüchle* (München, 1975).

Sellers, R.V., *The Council of Chalcedon: A Historical and Doctrinal Survey* (London, 1953).

Sieger, J.D., 'Visual Metaphor as Theology: Leo the Great's Sermons on the Incarnation and the Arch Mosaics at S. Maria Maggiore,' *Gesta*, 26 (1987), 83–91.

Soos: *see* De Soos.

Spain, S., ' "The Promised Blessing": the Iconography of the Mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore,' *The Art Bulletin*, 64 (1979), 518–40.

Spedalieri, F., 'La Madre del Salvatore nella Soteriologia di San Leone Magno,' *Marianum*, 25 (1963), 23–38.

Speller, L., 'Conflict and Controversy in Ambrosiaster,' unpublished D Phil thesis (University of Oxford, 1980).

Squire, A.K., 'Universal Compassion in Leo the Great,' *Studia Patristica*, 13 (1975), 280–5.

Stancliffe, C., *St Martin of Tours and his Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983).

Sterk, A., *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

Stevens, C.E., *Sidonius Apollinaris and his Age* (Oxford, 1933).

Stewart, A.C. '*Persona* in the Christology of Leo I: a Note,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 71 (1989), 3–5.

Stockmeier, P., '*Imperium* bei Papst Leo dem Grossen,' *Studia Patristica*, 3 (1961), 413–20.

—— 'Universalis Ecclesia: Papst Leo der Grosse und der Osten,' *Kirchengemeinschaft—Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart, 1986), 83–91.

Studer, B., '*Consubstantialis Patri Consubstantialis Matri*: Une antithèse christologique chez Léon le Grand,' *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 18 (1972), 87–115.

—— 'Il concetto di "consostanziale" in Leone Magno,' *Augustinianum*, 13 (1973), 599–607.

—— 'Die Einflüsse der Exegese Augustins auf die Predigten Leos des Grossen,' *Forma Futuri: Studi in Onore del Cardinale Michele Pellegrino* (Turin, 1975), 915–30.

—— 'Sacramentum et Exemplum chez S. Augustin,' *Recherches Augustiniennes*, 10 (1975), 87–141.

—— 'Una Persona in Christo: Ein augustinisches Thema bei Leo dem Grossen,' *Augustinianum*, 25 (1985), 453–87.

Talley, T., *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2nd edn. (New York, 1991).

TeSelle, E., *Augustine the Theologian* (London, 1970).

Testa, R.L., 'Christianization and Conversion in Northern Italy,' in A. Kreider (ed.), *The Origins of Christendom in the West* (Edinburgh, 2001), 47–95.

Testard, M., 'La spiritualité pastorale de saint Léon le Grand: À propos d'une correction du pape par lui-même' in J.C. Fredouille and L. Holtz (eds.), *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes*, vol 1 (Paris, 1992), 239–54.

Testini, P., *Le catacombe e gli antichi cimiteri in Roma* (Bolgona, 1966).

Trout, D.E., *Paulinus of Nola: Life, Letters, and Poems* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

Tuilier, A., 'Le Primat de Rome et la collégialité de l'épiscopat d'après la correspondance de saint Léon avec l'Orient,' *Nuovo Didaskaleion*, 15 (1965), 53–67.

Ullmann, W., 'Leo I and the Theme of Papal Primacy,' *Journal of Theological Studies*, ɴs 11 (1960), 25–51.

Urbainczyk, T., *Theodoret of Cyrrhus: The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002).

Van Bavel, T., *Recherches sur la Christologie de saint Augustin: l'humain et le divin dans le Christ d'après saint Augustin* (Fribourg, 1954).

Vannier, M.-A., *Jean Cassien: Traité de l'Incarnation contre Nestorius* (Paris, 1999).

Vogt, H.J., 'Papst Cölestin und Nestorius,' in G. Schwaiger (ed.), *Konzil und Papst: Historische Beiträge zur Frage der höchsten Gewalt in der Kirche. Festgabe für Hermann Tüchle* (München, 1975), 85–101.

Vollmann, B., *Studien zum Priszillianismus: die Forschung, die Quellen, der fünfzehnte Brief Papst Leos des Grossen* (Erzabtei St Ottilien, 1965).

Wallace-Hadrill, A.N., 'Civilis Princeps: Between Citizen and King,' *Journal of Roman Studies*, 72 (1982), 32–48.

Ward-Perkins, B., *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy AD 300–850* (Oxford, 1984).

Weijenborg, R. 'Leo der Grosse und Nestorius,' *Augustinianum*, 16 (1976), 353–98.

Weinandy, T.G., 'Cyril and the Mystery of the Incarnation,' in T.G. Weinandy and D.A. Keating (eds.), *The Theology of St Cyril of Alexandria: A Critical Appreciation* (London, 2003).

Wermelinger, O., *Rom und Pelagius: die theologische Position der römischen Bischöfe im pelagianischen Streit in den Jahren 411–432* (Stuttgart, 1975).

Wickham, L. (ed.), *Cyril of Alexandria: Select Letters* (Oxford, 1983).

—— 'Pelagianism in the East,' in R. Williams (ed.), *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1989), 200–13.

Willis, G.G., *Essays in Early Roman Liturgy* (London, 1964).

Winkelmann, F., 'Papst Leo I und die sog. Apostasia Palästinas,' *Klio*, 70 (1988), 167–75.

Wood, I., 'The End of Roman Britain: Continental Evidence and Parallels,' in M. Lapidge and D. Dumville (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), 1–25.

Wuyts, A., 'Le 28ième canon de Chalcédoine et le Fondement du Primat Romain,' *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 17 (1951), 265–82.

Young, F., 'A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 22 (1971), 103–14.

—— Ayres, L., and Louth, A. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge, 2004).

Zecchini, G., 'Attila in Italia: Ragioni Politiche e Sfondo "Ideologico" di un'Invasione,' *Aevum*, 67 (1993), 189–98.

General Index

Index of Scripture